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Byron—a scribbler comes of age

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THE TIMES LITERARY SUPPLEMENT
JANUARY 23 1981

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A Scribbler comes of age

By Lorna Sage

JEROME J. McGANN (Editor): Lord Byron: The Complete Poetical Works
Volume 1
464pp. Clarendon Press: Oxford University Press. £35.
0 19 811690 2

This first volume of the new Oxford English Texts *Complete Poetical Works* of Byron raises an old question: just how did the fat boy from Harrow turn himself into a poet? The flab is, of course, even more in evidence this time round, with thirty-five previously uncollected bits and pieces helping to swell the volume; and the daunting scale of the textual apparatus (the last "thorough scholarly edition" was done almost eighty years ago, as Jerome J. McGann points out) makes Byron's dreadful juvenilia look all the more dim. To begin at the beginning is to wonder at its being a beginning at all:

Thro' thy battlements, Newstead, the hollow winds whistle;
Thou, the hall of my fathers, art gone to decay;
In thy once smiling gardens, the hemlock and thistle
Have choak'd up the rose, which late bloom'd in the way.

"On Leaving Newstead Abbey", the poem that opened his first publicly printed volume *Hours of Idleness* (1807), was proudly dated by Byron "1803" (when he was fifteen). He obviously felt this should impress readers the right way at the outset, but the silly jauntiness and the arrogant parade of "ancestors" (including at least a couple of whom, as the commentary notes, "there is no record") have quite a contrary effect—even if you don't know that Newstead was rented at the time to Lord Grey de Ruthin (who seems to have made a humiliating pass at him), and that he was painfully at odds with his fat, passionate and vulgar mother (who, he suspected, fancied Lord Grey), and awfully conscious of the shakiness of his station.

The second poem, on leaving Harrow (1806), took this same unpromising line:

Ye scenes of my childhood, whose love'd recollection,
Embitters the present, compar'd with the past;
Where science first dawn'd on the powers of reflection,
And friendships were form'd, too romantic to last.

His title and his youth (*Hours of Idleness* described the author as "George Gordon, Lord Byron, a Minor") moved him to an ecstasy of self-caressing sadness and self-admiration, and his facility in verse seems to have completed the damage. He saw himself as brilliantly boyish, and sold as much in his Preface: the poems are "the fruits of the lighter hours of a young man, who has lately completed his nineteenth year": he will, he says, content himself "with the not very magnificent prospect, of ranking 'amongst the mob of gentlemen who write', my reader must determine, whether I dare say 'with ease'...". His snobbish squirming, and his wincing tenderness for his work, elicited a corresponding sycophancy from the first reviewers ("simple evidence", said the *Critical Review*, "of a correct taste, a warm imagination, and a feeling heart"). However, the *Edinburgh* reviewer (Brougham) did a splendid if slightly belated job on the whole production, especially on the subtext of the Preface:

He possibly means to say, "See how a minor can write! This poem was actually composed by a young man of eighteen, and this by one of only sixteen!"... So far from hearing, with any degree of surprise, that very poor verses were written by a youth from his leaving school to his leaving college . . . we really believe this to be the most common of occurrences; that it happens to the life of nine men in ten who are educated in England; and that the tenth man writes better verse than Lord Byron.

Brougham possibly fixed on the word "common" with a particular relish. He was out to undo Byron's sense of his own specialness, and to suggest how very vulgar "the noble minor" was in his insistence on it.

He was absolutely right at the time (though *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* in 1809, also in this volume, was to prove him wrong): the main interest of Byron's earliest writings is whinling out, with hindsight, any sign of something that was not "common". Brougham, of course, had not seen the even earlier, privately printed things—the libertine poem that set his mother's circle in a flutter ("Now, by my soul, 'tis most delight/To view each other panting, dying,/In love's extatic *postura* lying . . ."); or the "tender" lyrics to his boy loves. But they would hardly have changed his mind. "To E. ——" (an all-purpose love poem, according to Professor McGann, who coolly consigns it to both an anonymous tenant's son of 1802 and to Edleston, Byron's Cambridge choirboy of 1805) sets the tone:

And though unequal is *thy* fate
Since title deck't my higher birth;
Yet envy not this gaudy state,
Thine is the pride of modest worth.

"Fugitive" early Byron is perhaps even more smug than dilettante Byron. Edleston moved him to lines that should at least be camp, but aren't ("he who seeks the flowers of truth,/Must quit the garden for the field"); and his gallant "gather ye rosebuds" verses to girls betray him into farcical revelations:

'Tis this, my belov'd, which spreads gloom o'er my features,
Tho' I oe'er shall prosume to arraign the decree.

Which God has proclaim'd, as the fate of his creatures,
In the death, which one day will deprive you of me.

You of me? By some dreadful vengeance (the god of rhyme perhaps) his poetical machine seems for once to have said what he really meant. The poem "To My Son" (not printed until after his death, addressed according to Professor McGann to an otherwise unrecorded bastard of 1807) suggests even more unsavoury possibilities:

Oh, 'twill be sweet in thee to trace,
Ere age has wrinkled o'er my face,
Ere half my glass of life is run,
At once a brother and a son . . .

This sounds to me like Humbert Humbert dreaming of engendering a line of Lolitas, though it may be what Wilson Knight meant when talking of Byron and Christian virtue—kindness to children and pets.

Things were going on that didn't get into the poems. He was filled with revulsion—against his mother, against his impoverished inheritance, and against himself. In April 1807 he wrote to his lawyer John Hanson from his mother's rented home:

Your speak of the *Charms* of Southwell, the *place I abhor*, the Fact is I remain here because I can appear no where else, being *completely* done up. *Wine & Women* have *dished* your *humble Servant*, not a *Sou* to be *had*, all *over*, condemned to exist, (I cannot say live) at this *Center* of Dullness, till my *Lease* of *Infancy* expires . . . you will be surprised to hear I am grown *very thin*, however it is the Fact . . . I have lost 18lb in my weight . . .

Though Brougham's review came as a shock, he had in a sense prepared for it. He was plotting his escape from minority (despite the wine and women bout) and from England; and coincidentally, getting into shape for Grub Street. He began "The British Bards" in October, feeling pleasant with himself, and completed *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* almost a year later in September 1808, smarting furiously (Brougham had intervened) but, poetically speaking, a new man:

I, too, can scrawl, and once upon a time
I poured along the town a flood of rhyme . . . .

His slimming methods were drastic ("I wear *seven* Waistcoats; & a Great Coat, run & play at Cricket") and so were his operations on his style: he turned meanly on the writers he had lovingly pastiched, on Scott's "half-strung harps", Moore's "melodious . . . lust", Bowles as "the oracle of tender souls". You can almost see the lard melting away.

He was pared down to genuine nausea and self-contradiction. *English Bards* is, textually, the most complicated case in the volume, in part because of Byron's chronic indecision about who and what to abuse, and how much. He maintained the aristocratic stance over the matter of accepting cash for your work—"No! When the sons of song descend to trade,/Their bays are sear, their former laurels fade" —but otherwise he acknowledged that he was in the business. And given that, universal spleen followed almost automatically:

I printed—older children do the same.
'Tis pleasant, sure, to see one's name in print;
A Book's a Book; altho' there's nothing in't.
Not that a title's sounding charm can save
Or scrawl or scribbler from an equal grave:
This LAMB must own, since his Potrician name
Failed to preserve the spurious Farce from shame.

No matter, GEORGE continues still to write,
Tho' now the name is veiled from public sight.
Moved by the great example, I pursue
The self-same road, but make my own review:
Not seek great JEFFREY'S yet like him will be
Self-constituted Judge of Poesy.

Byron thought Jeffrey was responsible for the *Edinburgh* piece; but really Byron, in attacking others, was attacking himself. His malice against noble authors and Scottish toasts in this passage, for instance, must have been considerably sharpened by the memory of writing—only a few short months before—lines like these:

I would I were a careless child,
Still dwelling in my Highland cave,
Or roaming through the dusky wild,
Or bounding o'er the dark blue wave.
Fortune! take back these cultur'd lands,
Take back this name of splendid sound!...

There was also his Ossianic effort, *English Bards* puts Byron on the spot, though he only occasionally pauses to notice it ("every Brother Rake will smile to see/That mirthless, a Moralist in me!"), and hides behind Gifford (editor of the *Quarterly*, "some Bard in virtue strong") when his position becomes unbearably embarrassing. His own private notes from 1816—"Unjust", "Misquoted", "Too ferocious—this is mere insanity", "*Fool* enough certainly *then* and no wiser since" (on himself)—reflect wryly on his hit-and-run tactics. The only passage that wins his mature approval ("Good") is the one (lines 632-7) ticking off the Society for the Suppression of Vice.

Professor McGann, in an uncharacteristically opinionated note of his own, suggests that Byron "really had no intense satiric quarrel with his age", which seems right when you consider how many of his objects of attack were later woven into his life. Monk Lewis, for example, who gets some memorable lines:

All hail, M.P.! from whose infernal brain
Thin shocted phantoms glide, a grisly train;
Even Satan's self with them might dread to dwell,
And in thy skull discern a deeper hell.

Perhaps this was always included as something of a compliment; certainly Lewis later became a friend, and so of course did "immoral" Moore. Lamb ("Damned like the Devil") was the husband of Byron's noisiest mistress, and the son of his confidante Lady Melbourne. Lord Holland, here the arch-patron of hacks ("HOLLAND's banquets shall each tail repay;/While grateful Britain yields the praise she owes,/To HOLLAND'S hirelings, and to Learning's foes") became enough of an ally by 1812 for Byron to suppress the fifth edition of *English Bards* altogether. Joseph Blackett, the hopeless and briefly fashionable cobbler-poet ("How ladies read! and Literati land!"), might have seemed a safely distant target, but he had, as it turned out, been patronized by the clever and rich Miss Millbanke. . . .

For the moment, however, Byron felt justifiably exhilarated at coming of age and at getting out of England. His parting doggerel on the Lisbon packet is splendidly euphoric—for once he isn't the one who is sick:

Hobhouse muttering fearful curses
As the hatchway down he rolls,
Now his breakfast, now his verses
Vomits forth and damns our souls:
'Here's a stanza
On Bregenza!
Help!—a couplet—no, a cup
Of warm water—
What's the matter?
Zounds! My liver's coming up.'

Even his Greek fever in 1810 found him congratulating himself—"Poor B-n, sweats—alas! how changed from him/So plump in feature, and so round in limb,/Grinning and gay in Newstead's monkish lone . . ."—by the time of *Hints from Horace* (1811) he can openly jeer at the "mob of gentlemen":

Shall I, thus qualified to sit
For rotten boroughs, never show my wit?
Shall I, whose fathers with the quorum sate,
And lived in freedom on the public mate,
To all their income, and to—twice as much
Whose form and pedigree have scarce a fault—
Shall I, I say, suppress my Attic salt?

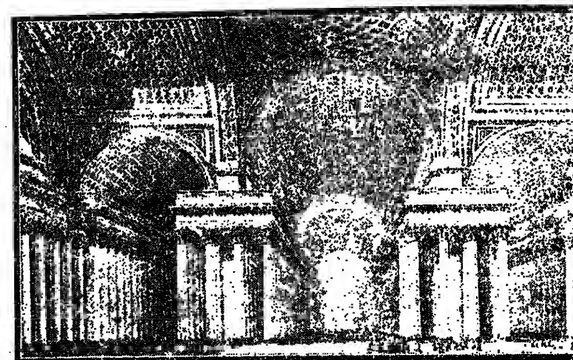
This splendid piece of parodic bluster, he must have felt, freed him from Broughem's accusations, made him a professional. The same year, on his return, he is quite clear (in a letter to Augusta) what his rule is to be:

Nothing so fearful, so despicable
as a Scribbler, see what I am,
& what a parcel of Scoundrels
I have brought about my ears,
& what language I have been
obliged to treat them with to deal
with them in their own way;—
all this comes of Authorship, but
now I am in for it, & shall be
at war with Grubstreet, till I find
some better amusement.

It would be convenient if the story, even of Volume One, stopped here, with Byron a convinced and rueful (and slender) "Scribbler", who had put Harrow and Cambridge behind him. In Greece, pickled in real "Attic salt", he had been sure of it—"all my old school companions are gone forth into the world, and walk about in monstrous disguises, in the garb of Guardsmen, lawyers, parsons, fine gentlemen, and such other mesquerade dresses"—but England proved a different matter. And of course the emotional dondy had not withered away; he was relearning for *Childe Harold*, in pagans on the death of Edleston, and a poisonous "epistle" about Mary Chaworth, whom he loved at fifteen:

I've seen my bride another's bride,
Have seen her sported by his side,
Have kiss'd, as if without design,
The babe which ought to have been mine. . . .
But let this pass—I'll whine no more,
Nor seek again an eastern shore;
The world befits a busy brain,
I'll hie me to its haunts again.
But if, in some succeeding year,
When Britain's "May" is in the "sere",
Thou hear'st of me, whose deepening crimes
Suit with the sablest of the times. . . .
One rank'd in some recording page
With the worst anarchs of the age. . . .

And at about the same time Byron writes to an old Harrow chum, regretting "the state of Society, in the World everyone is to steer for himself . . . but I do not think we are born for this disposition, for you find friendship as a schoolboy, & Love enough before twenty". Though he had changed himself radically, the plump and mawkish minor was still inside trying to get out, and succeeding—using bitter "experience" indeed as a cover, writing good bad poetry. That, though, is Volume Two. With a full chronological text to sat alongside the *Letters* and *Journals*, Byron's awesome, perhaps awful capacity to experiment with the contradictory ingredients of his personality is going to become more difficult to cope with, and more fascinating, to me by time.



One of the many drawings for unrealized projects (in this case "a metropolitan cathedral") done late in his career by the eighteenth-century architect Etienne-Louis Boullée. It is in the RIBA exhibition of drawings from the Drummond-Stewart Collection, at the Heinz Gallery, 21 Portman Square, W1, until February 14.

This volume ends with a Latin lament for Edleston ("What remains for me now? only groans, or a brother's vague dreams . . .") uncollected before, and only once published, in the Catalogue of the 1974 V & A exhibition, as if to stress the importance of establishing a new text of the complete poems. And obviously it is important, though the price (£35 for Volume One) relegates it to libraries—which, though one has become used to it, is an absurdity. There may be other lurking absurdities too: it seems that the standards of accuracy and the elaborate textual apparatus which "justify" the price may now be becoming beyond the reach even of Professor McGann and the Clarendon Press. Certainly the lists of the contents of each of Byron's first four books of poetry ("for those who wish to reconstruct the complete sequential texts") which appear on page 363 are complete nonsense: each of these collections started, we are told, with poem number thirty, but look up poem number thirty and you will find that it is one of Professor McGann's special prizes—a piece *unpublished before*, a nicely scurrilous "portrait" of a hated lady, which comes from a "draft MS at Texas".

Dosts yet tha hog that from her sole,
A race shall quicken to enrich our soil?
Her poisonous blood thro' other channels roll
And spread pollution in each new-born soul?
Forbid it Heaven—but yet n thought more wild—
Ne'er fixed the fancy of the veriest child.
See her each old one fold in close embrace,
And flattering hopes from drivelling tales intoile,
Teles that Dependents hatch for wholesple;
Each herb, each philtre idling art employ
How to produce a much longed lovely boy.
Her phantom form now doubly rendered spara

This scholarly industry that reclaimed this emetic fragment is impressive. All the more irritating than to discover the trivial blunder over numbering. It is not hard to work out what went wrong: earlier lists which did not include Indian from Texas have crept unnoticed into the final text. Easily done—except that it really should not, and must not be, if scholarly projects on this scale are to remain credible or feasible. I have not spotted any other mistakes of the same kind, but to suspect they are there is enough. The least the Clarendon Press can do is issue a pleasantly Byronic sheet of "errata" with the next volume. While they are at it, I offer a couple of innocent literals: a misplaced line on p 373, in the notes to lines 57 and 64 of *Thoughts Suggested by a College Examination*, and a spoiled joke—it pos as *Irsy* or—an[d] Irish minel" on p 308.

October

We have lived in small towns hard by the sea.
Even the lorries
seemed to have come to take the waters,
stiff-spined
in the difficult streets.

The woods thrashed like tethered water,
the municipal paddling-pool
spilled in the brownish, nervous hands
of our estuary floods.
Stale ocean backed up and fresh,

the dry miniature gullies filled and pulsed
like a frog's web under a microscope.
The world was glistening with wet.
When the old man took of your promise,
remember that it is not made to them.

Lachlan Mackinnon

Growing hostile to gays

By Peter Linehan

JOHN BOSWELL:
Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality
420pp. University of Chicago Press. £16.50.
0 226 06710 6

The contours of large tracts of John Boswell's subject were revealed by D. S. Bailey in *Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition* (1955): a pioneering work which succeeded in acquitting the medieval Church of responsibility for modern hostility towards homosexual behaviour, and revealed the historical fragility of ethical arguments which were supposed to date from the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Bailey's detached survey was intended to influence both public opinion and the legislators. The measure of his success, and that of other campaigners, in both fields is evident here in this highly detailed and sometimes impassioned study. Although he concedes that "it is not possible to write history in a vacuum", Boswell regards it as "the province of the historian not to praise or blame but merely to record and explain". "What will awake some readers as a particular point of view", he suggests, "is chiefly the absence of the negative attitudes on this subject ubiquitous in the modern West; after a long, loud noise, a sudden silence may seem deafening".

Presented as a study of "intolerance as a historical force", Boswell's work follows much the same course as Bailey's but in far greater detail. Much of the detail is unfamiliar, some of it necessarily so. The author delights in exposing the crypness of earlier writers, notably the editors of the Loeb Classics, and in catching translators bowdlerising in corners. There is nothing coy about Boswell's text and footnotes; the clangor of bloody shovels is almost deafening. He is concerned almost exclusively with male homosexuality, and there is much here to admire and wonder at. Though by no means the work of "unfailing erudition" of Michel Foucault's *imprimatur*, in terms of scholarship it is infinitely superior to Michael Goodich's recent *The Unmentionable Vice*.

Boswell's first nine chapters survey the period down to the mid-twelfth century, by which time Rome was sold, to be "awash" with gay people. There is much evidence to suggest that they were till then generally tolerated. The author's indebtedness to Bolley is here most apparent, though he presents a quantity of new material and subjects to careful scrutiny the hypothesis that gay sexuality was a predominantly urban phenomenon. The offence of Sodom, it is argued, was lack of hospitality to the angelic visitors, while the "abomination" of Leviticus xviii 22—a thing "ceremonially unclean rather than intrinsically evil"—was not part of the Mosaic law by which the earliest Christians were bound in Acts xv. Nor will Boswell allow the persecutors to recruit Paul to their cause. There appears to have been "no general prejudice against gay people among early Christians"; there were spectators, notably Paulinus. The minority of patristic writers who condemned gay behaviour were equally censorious of usury, shaving and regular bathing. It was not "against nature", for Augustine as for Paul". Boswell insists, "nature referred to the characteristics of individuals or things rather than to an ideal concept". Nor was it for the long influential Boethius—although the condemnation of gay sexuality enshrined in Clement of Alexandria's *Paedagogus* was also based on arguments from nature, derived largely was from the prohibition on the eating of the hare and the hyena in the apocryphal Epistle of Barnabas and the mistaken zoology regarding these animals' sexual proclivities.

Not until 533—two centuries after Christianity had become the imperial religion—was homosexuality outlawed, and then bishops appear to have been the chief advocates of vigilance rather than its upholders. And in seventh-century Spain, where Boswell uncovers the real problem in the Middle Ages, the Visigothic kings were not the only people who were alarmed at the prevalence of homosexual practices. "The only surviving Carolingian civil statute regarding homosexuality is a forgery." The evidence of the penitentials suggests that "viewed comparatively homosexuality appears to have been thought less grave than such common activities as hunting". It was objectionable in so far as it involved the release of "impure" seed. "Sodomy" described any such non-procreative emission and so "included much—if not most—heterosexual activity". The evidence presented leads Boswell to conclude that "despite considerable local variation, attitudes towards homosexuality grew steadily more tolerant throughout the early Middle Ages", and, while local variation is not sufficiently accorded the attention it deserves, and some biblical scholars may gainsay him, he will generally carry his readers with him at least this far. The penance set by Burchard of Worms for mutual masturbation—thirty days—was the same as that for challenging a friend to a drinking bout.

Burchard died in 1025, on the eve of the period of social, psychological and ideological ferment so inadequately described as "the reform movement". According to Boswell, gays were hardly affected by it. In *Liber Gomorrhianus* (c 1051) St Peter Damian excoriated homosexual practices—but he failed to persuade Pope Leo IX to adopt thoroughgoing measures against clerical offenders. Of Alexander II's subsequent confiscation of the book and his refusal to return it to Peter, Boswell comments that the pope was "a pupil of Lanfranc, famous for his passionate devotion to younger monks". There is more than a suggestion that the pope's action, and that of Urban II on another occasion, were motivated by personal predilection, even that the pontiffs were part of a vast gay network; and at this point doubts crowd in: there is no evidence that Lanfranc was Alexander's teacher, and anae that Boswell adduces regarding his "passionate devotion".

In his chapter of cautionary observations entitled *Definitions*, Boswell states that "there is no conceivable way of quantifying the homosexual versus heterosexual experience of most historical personages". As he approaches the twelfth century, however, he casts aside all discretion and utters judgments which appear sexually innumerate. It may be that "homosexual attachments and relations are no more peculiar biologically than friendship, but the psychohistorian's task is to distinguish the two states—particularly when dealing with an age which made such an art of friendship". Having reviewed it, Boswell seems to forget Kinsey's seven-point scale of sexual behaviour, and neglects the possibility, earlier suggested, that "effusive romantic expressions between persons of the same gender . . . may be hyperbolic manifestations of distinctly non-erotic friendships or even simple charity".

Prudently perhaps, the erotic poet-bishop Baudri of Bourgeuil claimed as much, but, while no such claim either was—or could plausibly have been—made by many of the figures whom the author inspects in his remarkable chapter on gay literature in the twelfth century, his treatment of the emotions expressed by others in terms which seem to admit of only one interpretation is objectionable. There is a world of difference between the togetherness of the back row of the scrum and the sexual gymnastics performed in the male brothels of Chartres and Paris, but reference to a man's "lover" conveys a particular impression. The statements regarding Alfred of Rievaux—that "there can be little question that" he "was gay and that his erotic attraction to men was a dominant force in his life" and that it is "unquestionable" that his experiences "involved overt sexuality"—require harder evidance than an abbreviated excerpt from the saint's lament for his beloved Simon in *Speculum Charitatis*, and particularly in view of Boswell's charges of editorial cover-ups, here as elsewhere—deserva to be confronted with Ailred's own assertion in the same chapter: *Amploxabar te, dilecte frater; non carne, sed corde. Osculabor te, non oris attactu, sed mentis effectu.* "The complexity of human existence must inevitably frustrate efforts at logical analysis", as the author recognizes, and yet Ailred lies before him: *Nemo scit hominum quid agatur in homine, nisi spiritus hominis qui in ipso est.*

The subtletlee of the autlur of *De spiritnoli amicitia* prove too complex for Boewell. So, indeed, do those of twelfth-century humanism and spiritually entire. He develops and adorns his subject without appreciating the importance and the relevance of the insights of R. W. Southern, Colin Morris and many others concerning the nature of humanism, the discovery of the individual, group psychology, and the "Jesus as Mother" and associated themes which were so prominent in Cistercian monasticism and are so central to the period crucial to his own argument. Astonishingly, St Bernard ("doubtless the most influential religious leader of the day") appears only fleetingly, to represent those who were "certainly not aware of any erotic elements in their feelings". It is as if Dom Jean Leclercq had never been, even allowing for the possibility that his *Monks and Love* appeared too late for Boswell's purposes, though good cause rather than deficient scholarship may account for the omission of mention of Walter Map's observation on the story of Barnard's failure to revive the dead youth à la Elisha.

Boswell's account of St Anselm of Canterbury is as much tendentious as misinformed. He suggests that Anselm "may have had personal reasons for suppressing" the decrees of the 1102 Council of London against *sodomiticum flagitium*. He was, like Alexander II, a pupil of Lanfranc; "love and friendship", in the words of his illustrious modern biographer, "had been the dominant feature of his early and middle years". Inference breeds implication, and what is implied here is unwarranted, and not only as to "the Lanfranc set". As Southern, who is being quoted, continues: "He had a gift for friendship which is only found in those who enter into the minds and anxieties of others, no matter how remote from their own." Lanfranc is referred to merely as a teacher "to whom (Anselm) committed his affections and his whole future". It takes a very literal and imaginative reading to conclude that while "erotic interest appears not to have been the primary component of most of Anselm's relationships", some of his epistolary output appears erotic by any standards". This of the leaden interpretation of the obsessive lauxiltor rather than of the dispassionate inquirer. B. McGuire's study of Anselm's sexual nature (*Studia Theologica*, 28) is cited, but not its conclusion that there is no evidence of Anselm's ever having given physical expression to his affections, nor his observation that he not uncommonly used physical imagery in writing to people he did not know. Evidently science cannot be too careful. Historians of the central Middle Ages meanwhile need to be aware of the levels of meaning employed by biblical exegetes, let alone by Anselms and Ailreds. Physical imagery remains *imagery*; friends may be "just friends". (And the same may go for Paulinus.)

Even if such language be allowed to be understood literally, is it safe to judge the archbishop's actions solely in the light of private correspondence of twenty or forty years before? (Would a historian, or a journalist, judge those of a statesman in the 1980s solely in the light of his wartime public-school crushes?) In any event there are other grounds for rejecting the author's account of the events of 1102. Elsewhere Boswell states of William Rufus that "only Orderic Vitalis mentions homosexual relations specifically, and he does so only in passing", and adjudges Orderic's testimony untrustworthy, thus reversing the roles which historians have assigned to king and prelate. This is wrong, and based on a too hasty reading of E. A. Freeman. The author has ignored Anselm's biographer, Eadmer, who describes the archbishop's public denunciation of the mincing gait and unguidly winking of young men at Rufus's court, as well as the confrontation with the king at which Anselm denounced *nefandissimum* Sodomae *scelus* and expressed his fear that the land would become a new Sodom unless a council was summoned to act: the very council whose decree, Boswell suggests, Anselm "suppressed". Moreover, the text of Anselm's letter, of which Bailey provided a translation, reveals that the archbishop was anxious not to suppress, but to refine and perfect the penalties stipulated, in that decree and in others, in accordance with the conditions of the penitents (the so-called doctrina of circumstances) as befitted the zealous pastor. So it appears that the tide had turned, in English ecclesiastical circles at least, by the very beginning of the twelfth century.

Boswell, however, locates the beginnings of repression in the Holy Land—though oddly he omits to provide details (Council of Neplouse, 1120)—and he seems reluctant to acknowledge official disapproval prior to the decree of the Lateran Council of 1179 regarding *incontinentia illa quae contra naturam est*. While this latter can hardly have been "as if in direct response" to Peter Cantor's *Verbum Abbreviatum*, which was composed in the 1190s, there is much interest in the author's account of the onset of hostility and its relationship to falling Christian fortunes in the Holy Land and its involvement with heresy at home. E. Le Roy Ladurie is in trouble here, for counting wrong. So is Aquinas, for being unreasonable; his arguments from *natura* and natural law Boswell finds unpersuasive. "Aquinas could bring to bear no argument against homosexual behaviour which would make it more serious than overeating and admitted, moreover, that homosexual desire was the result of a 'natural' condition, which would logically have made behaviour resulting from it not only inculpable but "good". Yet the width of the alleged gulf between Aquinas and Grotien a century before is set by the author's conviction that mention of offences *contra naturam* in Grotian has nothing to do with the case, because the penitential manuals read Augustine as Boswell does, and because what is not mentioned is not worth mentioning rather than unmentionable—or, in Grotian's case, is imperfinent to the matrimonial material with which he is concerned.

Clearly, secular governments were not slow to match ecclasiastical prescription or, as is suggested, to be guided by (or was it to guide?) public opinion, to their great profit in, for example, the case of Philip the Fair and the Templers. If, however, the positions of Aquinas and other high medieval theologians regarding homosexuality appear to have been a response more to the pressures of popular antipathy than to the weight of Christian tradition", then we need to know more about those pressures and their origins. This book is to be welcomed not least for the encouragement that it will give to such enterprises. The author's own suggestions as to the reasons for the onset of repression are properly cautious, and his contrast of the case with that of usury is instructive. In so far as popular attitudes were concerned, presumably not much help was provided by purgatory.

This invariably interesting study falls short by claiming too much, and by insistently, and at times recklessly, crowding out other considerations in its concern with the centrality of its theme. The book is beautifully produced. Its appendixes include translations of the poems "Ganymede and Helen" (not "Help!") and "Merchet Clergy", and the plates are instructive—though that of the fourteenth-century Christ and St John, as well as standing in need of some explication in relation to the chronology proper, in the text, again makes one wish that Professor Boswell had not only confined himself more strictly to his primary intention "merely to record and explain", but had also cast a finer net even wider.

Lengthening the line

By Victoria Glendinning

JACK DEWHURST:
Royal Confinements
205pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £8.95.
0 297 77847 1

The term "sexual politics" takes on an added meaning after reading Jack Dewhurst's account of 200 years of royal precedents. Royal childbirth was a political matter: religious affiliations, international relations, the fate of administrations and dynasties, often hung on an umbilical cord.

The wastage of both royal ladies and babies, was prodigious; Caesarians, when attempted, nearly always proved fatal; and the hazardous proceedings were controlled by a closed shop of midwives, male and female. Only the female midwife was allowed by right into the royal bedroom; the male midwife could only enter in emergencies, at her request. He, however, had the monopoly of the use of obstetric instruments—a monopoly held for many decades (time is the Unauthorized Family, who introduced obstetric forceps at the end of the sixteenth century. The reigning Mr Chamberlen would arrive with a huge carved wooden box in which his tongs were concealed; they were his trade secret, and no one ever saw them.

Since so much depended on the birth of a legitimate heir, and since there were always so many female parties keen on distorting the succession stakes of false pregnancies and skulduggery about the birth, there were rumours that the Queen of James II and Mary of Modena was a changeling, that the child was not her own, that he had been smuggled into Mary's room in a warming-pan. Dewhurst says that the child was in fact her own child, and that the rumours were spread by the Protestant party, who had invited William of Orange to come to England and take the throne from James. It was a bad moment for James. It was bad for Mary of Modena, who underwent a long, difficult, painful labour, and was then accused of having faked it. It was bad for the child, who was kidnapped by William's men and taken to Holland, where he was brought up as a Protestant prince. It was bad for William, who was left without a child at all. While refuting this story, Sir Jack—who is Professor of Obstetrics and Gynaecology at the University of London—has done a little practical research on warming-pans. "I was able to place a 5lb. child comfortably, without closing the lid but this might have been uncomfortable if the baby had been folded up more tightly." To allay suspicions, it was the custom for Queens to give birth in public. Substitution would have required great sleight of hand—and of warming-pan—since there were well over forty people in the room while poor Mary of Modena was in labour, from the Lord Chancellor to the "pages of the back stairs".

After 1689 the fertility of two women—Mary, wife of William of Orange, and her sister, later Queen Anne—become vitally important, "for the future of the House of Stuart lay in their hands, or more correctly, in their wombs". They both failed. Sir Jack investigates in depressing detail the "eventful obstetric career" of Queen Anne—seventeen pregnancies, nearly all ending in disaster, with her longest surviving child dying at the age of eleven.

The Hanoverians were better breeders, even though the notoriety of Frederick, son of George II, was questioned by his prurient parents. His mother, Queen Caroline, had unpleasant conversations with Hervey about the likelihood of Frederick's impregnating his wife by proxy.

Why, for a month before and after putting the design in execution, I would advise the Prince to go to bed several hours after his wife, and to prolong to get up for a few hours, several times the night, to perfume himself always with some predominant smell, and by the help of these tricks it would be very easy, by causing himself to relate, before her, a book to put the chemist of any man into his own size upon her, as she pleased.

In fact the couple produced nine children, unaided. But the biggest reproductive success story of any royal family in the history of this country" was that of their son George III and Queen Charlotte—fifteen children in twenty-one years. "By any standard this is a remarkable achievement", notes Sir Jack, like a games master on a school report.

Since the whole point was to beget and bring forth as many live children as possible in order to safeguard succession, Sir Jack merely touches on the question of contraception; but his accounts of perinatal care in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are full and very interesting, especially as regards royal wet-nurses, who were a privileged class of person carefully screened for the quality of their morals and their milk. The latter was assessed by means of the "Nill Test", which "appears to have been used almost unchanged for more than a thousand years". As an eighteenth-century irritant of a sixteenth-century Lotin poem had it,

Avoid what on your soil, too rapy provos,
Adheres too fast, or thence too swiftly moves.

That is, it must be neither too viscous nor too runny.

The saddest story here is that of the death in 1817 of the Princess Charlotte, wife of Leopold of Saxe-Coburg. The diary of Sir Richard Croft, her medical adviser, has survived, and Sir Jack quotes from it to horrid effect. Charlotte was in the second stage of labour for twenty-four hours—two hours is normally considered quite a long time. Forceps were out of fashion at that period; the baby was born dead, and the Princess died soon after.

The crude and desperate measures that were taken to help her the pain, the mess, and the hopelessness, are described in unsettling detail—unsetting, I would suggest, to not so much to the innocent susceptibilities of those who have never had children, but rather to those who have, and who can enter all too fully into the drama. This material is not new: Frances Crosby published a whimsical book about Princess Charlotte's "obstetric tragedy" in 1977. It is perhaps the cumulative effect of so many mismanaged confinements that gives the story a renewed impact here.

Charlotte's death, and her baby's meant that there was not in existence a single legitimate child from any of the fifteen children of George III. At least three sons of Royal Dukes rushed round Europe to find brides, get heirs, and rear them to adulthood. The Duke and Duchess of Clarence, the senior pair, failed at the last fence, due to miscarriages and the stoopidness; was won by the Duke and Duchess of Kent, and the result was Queen Victoria, to whom we owe the popular acceptance of the use of anaesthesia in labour.

But what is not so widely appreciated is the risk doctors were taking with Her Majesty's life. The science of anaesthesia was only ten years old when chloroform was first administered to the Queen, and similar cases "sudden death" occurred and would continue to occur". To Victoria, however, chloroform was a "sweet, soothing, quieting and delightful" beyond measure".

It was not to be 103 years after the birth of Queen Victoria's youngest child before a reigning Queen again bore a child—when Prince Andrew was born to Queen Elizabeth II. Here Sir Jack's sugar candy was not quite so sweet. Her Majesty got no such "delightful" book. But the very readable book leaves one with the distorted impression, but very lively impression, that the history of England was largely worked out on the playing fields of Eton, not on the battlefields of Europe nor in the councils of statesmen, nor in the overcrowded foetid rooms of confined women.

Alexandrines for Livy

In Livy's wonderful history of the city
From its foundation, there's just the triangular ball
Out in the water, and the leg, its famous boil
Pulsating by the knee. Everywhere else is misty,

At first: behind thick cloud Aeschylus sweats and thumps
His worn-out sword; a nameless Indian invents chess;
Three Aztec prisoners can't sleep: early forms of us
Lose their virginity, their axes, queers and combs.

But here, already focused, round the consuls' tent
Plebeian faces, deafened in their helmets, lean
To the great argument: will their centurion,
Named Marcus Flavoleius, call a strike, and end

The future empire? We are stirred; but they don't know
There are a hundred volumes someone's got to fill.
For Christ's sake, on the horizon Greece is visible.
Won't there be punning shots of elephants and snow?

Won't there be Livy? Sitting here and looking down.
We see his book hauled up in jerks through layers of time
Like Simeon Stylites' lunch, and feel the column
Of history trembling now—as it has always done.

Alistair Elliot

Life near the top

By Archie Brown

ZDENEK MLYNAR:
Night Frost in Prague: The End of Humane Socialism
Translated by Paul Wilson
300pp. C. Hurst. £9.50.
0 905838 53 X

Political memoirs are an underdeveloped genre in communist states and those published are, for reasons connected with the very nature of the systems, substantially less revealing than many of their British or American counterparts. The Khrushchev memoirs are a case apart, but they were tape-recorded with an eye on foreign publication and so broke many—though by no means all—of the self-censoring constraints which would normally ensure that more was concealed than revealed.

The political memoirs of Zdenek Mlynář, *Night Frost in Prague*, are certainly the most important memoirs of a former communist politician to appear since Khrushchev's, and in a number of respects they constitute a more interesting work. If the importance of Khrushchev's memoirs lies in the relative candour—which sometimes reveals more than it intends—of someone who had held the highest political office of all in the only communist superpower, the importance of *Night Frost in Prague* depends partly on Mlynář's high political office as a Secretary of the Central Committee—and, more briefly, Politburo member—in 1968, but is also related to the fact that Mlynář, unlike Khrushchev, is an academic lawyer and political theorist by background and a highly perceptive analyst interested in showing how communist political systems actually work. His book is also exceedingly well written and well translated.

Mlynář joined the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in the spring of 1946 when he was not yet sixteen and his reflections on those early years are scarcely less interesting than his account of life near and at the top of the Czech Party hierarchy in the 1960s, though it is the latter (and his lengthy account of what happened in the Kremlin in August 1968 when the Soviet and Czechoslovak leaders met in the immediate aftermath of the occupation of Czechoslovakia by Soviet and other Warsaw Pact troops) which gives the volume its early value. Unique also are the extremely acute assessments (based upon observation from close quarters) which Mlynář provides of all the leading members of the Czechoslovak, and some of the more prominent members of the Soviet, leadership in the 1960s.

Looking back on the beliefs he had held as a teenager—and the reception of a handful of basic works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin as "a political bible"—Mlynář tries to understand from his more recent "god that failed" perspective their earlier attraction for him. The conclusion he reaches is that "the ideology contained in his literature gives someone who in reality knows very little or nothing at all the self-assurance of someone who has mastered the very laws that govern the development of mankind and the world". All that is required is the leap of faith, after which

> you know what is progressive and what is reactionary, what is good and what is bad for the future of mankind. And you also know what is and is not scientific without having to bother with any concrete scientific research. Among others who do not share this consciousness, who continue to speak about the objectivity of their own figures, you have become almost overnight a superior being with the correct view.

These views were the more easily adopted in immediate post-war Czechoslovakia when the Soviet Union itself played such an overwhelming, long-term part in the rejection of Fascism and the liberation of Mlynář's words, as of those of hosts for whom the Soviet Union was a fallen superpower from which they had to be liberated. Mlynář emphasizes the way these views were politically engaged, were seen largely in political terms. There were usually only two categories of people: revolutionaries and counter-revolutionaries. Stalin

Though the evolution of Mlynář's views from "Stalinism" to "reform communism" and beyond was a gradual one, the first doubts were implanted when he went to the "land of hope" in 1950 and studied law at Moscow University for five years. The encounter of an active young radical with the Soviet bureaucracy, and with the "genuinely fatalistic view of the world" which Mlynář found in so many ordinary Soviet citizens, naturally provided stimulus to reflection for a participant-observer of his intelligence.

One experience, described by Mlynář, calls to mind the description of the same scene by Yevgeny Yevtushenko in his memoirs (*A Precocious Autobiography*) — the crushing to death of countless Russians as they tried to make their way to see Stalin's body lying in state. Mlynář, like Yevtushenko, was saved by his height. Both men succeeded in extricating themselves from the crowd "which was moving slowly over dead bodies towards Stalin's coffin". For Mlynář, the gruesome scenes confirmed his impression of "the Soviet people's view of Stalin essentially as both a feared and beloved czar—nothing less, but hardly anything more either".

Though the Czech leader, Gottwald, died a week after Stalin—"as though", in Mlynář's words, "even in the act of jogging he was continuing his disciplined subservience in Moscow"—changes within the Politburo and in the political atmosphere came more slowly in Czechoslovakia than in the Soviet Union. Thus, for Mlynář, paradoxically, his return to Prague in 1955 was almost as great a shock as had been his arrival in Moscow five years earlier: "what had shocked me then in Moscow had since been successfully imported into Czechoslovakia; while in Moscow, in the meantime, some of those things were being discontinued, under the influence of a slow but very real subliminal movement".

After 1956—when Khrushchev's "secret speech" to the Twentieth Congress of the Soviet Communist Party set in motion a process of reassessment of past assumptions in the minds of many communists in Czechoslovakia (and elsewhere) —a reform movement gradually got under way that was to produce within the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia a critique of the status quo more far-reaching than that arrived at by their Soviet counterparts. By the mid-1960s, during the last years of Antonín Novotný's leadership of the party, a great many critical analyses of important aspects of the system were appearing in scholarly publications, in the weekly newspapers of the Czech and Slovak Writers' Unions, and even sometimes in the party press itself. Mlynář, in addition to his important work in party commissions and groups, was one of the most prolific writers; he was part of a broader movement within which he was one of the most significant and far-sighted reformers, though not the most radical. For Mlynář, as for most of his colleagues at that time, a "Kádárization" was not enough, for they did not regard Kádár's Hungary as essentially different from the Czechoslovakia of the late Novotný years. Novotný personally might have taken a less benign view of reform than did Kádár. But that notwithstanding, in Mlynář's words:

> Hundreds of writers, artists, historians, sociologists, economists, lawyers and philosophers—even since 1970 have been supporting themselves as stokers, labourers, window-washers, and God knows what else—were situated in the cultural, academic, and scientific institutions working and were in various spaces of one group through a crisis of the Novotný regime. And all that was taking place during Novotný's rule.

If the early and middle 1960s in Czechoslovakia are still often an object of oversimplification, the same goes for the Prague Spring itself. Mlynář, who was at its heart in personal terms, Mlynář emphasizes the way these years were politically engaged years, years lived in political terms. There were usually only two categories of people: reformers and conservatives. Stalin

labelling disguised the element of opportunism and tactical calculation on the part of many individuals who took up positions during this period of rapid political change. Mlynář, though he had been, as well as during, 1968 embraced positions which pointed to a radical reform of the existing political system (a "reform communism" which he now regards as an ideological delusion), was regarded as a centrist, mainly because he thought that the reform movement, if it was to succeed, had to be kept under some degree of control from above. The Prime Minister, Oldřich Černík, was usually regarded as a "progressive" and so for a time was Gustáv Husák (before it was decided that he, too, was a "centrist") and yet both men were rapidly to attempt to come to terms with the Soviet leadership after August 21, 1968, with Husák the quicker off his mark and the more successful of the two. Among the politically influential academics, Radovan Richta was not only a reputed "progressive" in 1968, but the author, Mlynář discloses, of the famous phrase "socialism with a human face", which he put into Dubček's mouth and into the Party's Action Programme. Yet Richta rapidly accommodated himself to the post-intervention realities and twelve years on he was one of the leading ideologists of the counter-reformation in Prague.

Newspaper extracts from Mlynář's memoirs concentrated on his account of what happened to the Kremlin in August, 1968. Mlynář was one of those who was there ("The fact that I was now sitting in Moscow, half hostage, half government guest, was the logical outcome of my entire life, of my entire political activity") and his book is worth purchasing just for his account of how the "Moscow Agreement" of August 26 was reached. Mlynář was not one of those Czech leaders who was abducted to Moscow on the night of August 20/21, but he joined his colleagues there on the morning of August 25 and it was he who brought to Dubček, Černík and Smrkovský news of the extraordinary solidarity of the non-violent resistance within Czechoslovakia to the Soviet armed intervention. From his conversations with the other leaders, both in Moscow and subsequently, he also got a detailed account of what had happened to his abducted colleagues since he last saw them.

This, then, is a first-hand account of communist politics as seen from a more exalted level in the party hierarchy than that attained by anyone else from the Soviet Union or Eastern Europe now living in the West. (Upon his emigration to Austria in 1977, Mlynář became the highest-ranking former communist official in the West.) But *Night Frost in Prague* is more than a memoir from the inside. It is, in addition, a significant contribution to political analysis, a work of genuine psychological insight, and one which provides stimulus in thought and useful knowledge in equal measure.

Rival rituals

By Percy Allum

ROBERT I. KERTZER:
Comrades and Christians: Religion and Political Struggle in Communist Italy
302pp. Cambridge University Press. £15 (paperback, £4.95).
0 521 22879 4

Anglo-American interest in Italian society has been much in vogue years that a number of empirical studies have appeared. Robert I. Kertzer's study of the grass-roots activity of Communists, Catholics and their allied organizations in Bologna in the 1970s is in this tradition. He gives us plenty of information about, and some insight into, the life of a working-class district in the city which is the administrative capital of Italian Communism, Bologna being the largest Italian city to have been administered continuously by the Communist Party since 1946. Particularly significant in this respect is the longish chapter on "The Battle for Ritual Supremacy" between Party and Church, in which Kertzer proposes an analytical distinction between "rites of passage" and "rites of counumity" and argues that while the Party has largely succeeded in supplanting the Church as the sponsor of "rites of community", the latter has continued to monopolize the "rites of passage".

The criticism that comes to mind rounding what is otherwise a lively and interesting study is the author's tendency to drop a problem when faced with the hard questions he writes, for example: "just why Italy of passage are so conservative would require a treatise in itself to examine". Agreed, but some suggestions of an answer, however tentative, would have been more satisfactory than the pirouette he actually performs. It is surprising in this connection that there is no reference to the work of Mirce Eliade in Kertzer's bibliography. A consideration of Eliade's view that the "desacralization" of history and structure of a society, and in particular to an experience of the sacred that is both transhistorical and transcendent of the social and cultural context, would have helped him to see particular cultural reality in a "Red Italy". Culture in Eliade's perspective is seen as a series of cults, or rituals, that transform natural experience into cultural modes of life. Here some celebration of the "fetishes" of the French "revolutionaries to create secular "rites of passage" instead of Christian ones in revolutionary France would also have been instructive.

This lack of a historical dimension can also be felt in Kertzer's final rejection of the concept of culture-as-culture in favour of the much more nebulous notion of hegemony as an explanation of the political allegiance of the working-class *bolognesi*. It would have helped him to understand a situation which he describes as being both confusing and contradictory without recourse to the "legendary human ability to variegate diverse symbolic systems". After all, rites are recorded even in Bologna, in a very unpromising historical experience.

Finally, Kertzer's pleadings for the special virtues of the anthropological method, of participant observation, is little grating. Few social scientists, be they sociologists, anthropologists or political scientists, can claim to be a single-method specialist, rely on a single method as a source of data, rely only on data collectable by one person, so that the method is indeed to

The art of embroidery

By David Gascoyne

ARAGON:
Le mentir-vrai
543pp. Paris. Gallimard

This first enquiry most non-Parisian readers want to make about Louis Aragon nowadays concerns the question of whether or not he is still an ardent Communist Party member and undeviating Stalinist. As time was too brief during a recent trip to the French capital, I was unable to attempt, as I had intended, to visit his apartment opposite the Soviet Embassy in order to interview him, and so I am afraid I am unable to furnish those eager to hear about Aragon's present political stance with any authentic utterance on the subject straight from the old war-horse's mouth. As to current popular French opinion, I think my Paris bookseller's answer, when asked whether this writer was still to be considered an unrepentant Stalinist, "Ah! le M Aragon d'aujourd'hui est surtout fantaisiste", may be taken as a fairly symptomatic comment.

It is now possible to describe Aragon as old without fear of offensive inaccuracy, since he was born in 1897. A poem called "Statue" in his earliest collection, *Feu de Joie* of 1919, ends with two lines that may be once more today to some extent true, or may be thought of as a premonitory comment on his by now abundant output of poetry and prose of many kinds:

> Un homme à la mer Encre
> A la dérive.

The political Aragon, who broke with his formerly close friend André Breton in 1930, after a famous row, may also be thought of as a man who joined the Party and threw in his lot with the capable and astute novelist Elsa Triolet, who was of Russian birth but after 1919 a Parisienne of decidedly Left inclination, in order firmly to put a stop to his own innate tendency to drift, without much thought for the morrow. It seems legitimate to speculate as to whether or not his friendship with the intransigently rebellious Nancy Cunard may have had some influence on his decision to sever connections with the revolutionary-minded but impatience surrealists; though I would have thought the tough British beauty too much of an individualist ever to have handicapped herself to any sort of berbed-wire Party line.

Aragon as a young man may well have been pleased to have been ordered a nonchalant wolfeniazer. Indeed, the third section in the present collection, dated 1926, which means to be for more a chapter of autobiographical reminiscence than a *nouvelle* in the strict sense, not only constitutes a fascinating evocation of Paris by Night, nearly sixty years ago, but contains a lyrical confession of how much the youthful frequentation of prostitutes meant to him. These particular pages illustrate well this side of the early Aragon, also to be found reflected in an amusing book of his surrealist period, *La Défonce*, which is, author apparently no longer finds satisfactory, "de croix que j'ai au bâcle des tamaras comme pas un. D'autres les font sans doute akinées davantage, l'en ai eu bassée. Et non pas d'une. De toutes les femmes... Du tableau tédéfolmant mobile des leurs possibilités." "Dignes, honorables, belles, vertueuses, honnêtes vous vient par les hommes restitutelée à grande vie métaphysique d'où les hommes ont fait sortir."

However, despite this initial taste for dissipation, soon after meeting Elsa Triolet in 1928 Aragon became an adorably old-fashioned poet, mythologizing his companion in a number of poetic works, and making her name almost as a symbol of the new revolutionary woman, a sort of reincarnation of Marianne as depicted by Delacroix. Breton, the great friend of his youth, after severing all connection with him, published his treatise on the surrealist doctrine of love, *L'Amour fou*, much later, in 1953. Aragon produced *Le Fou d'Elsa* in a very different vein, a long, rambling, semi-social sciences, be they sociologists, anthropologists or political scientists, can claim to be a single-method specialist, rely on a single method as a source of data, rely only on data collectable by one person, so that the method is indeed to

> Pier Paolo Pasolini
> translated from the Italian by N. S. Thompson

"Peace, Friendship. Welcome, dear friend": this cartoon, featuring the bex-headed "New Man", is from a selection of cartoons by the Russian Viatcheslav Sysoiev, entitled, after a 1935 pronouncement by Stalin, La vie est devenue meilleur . . . *(134pp. Paris: Librairie EMI L'Alternative). Born in 1937, Sysoiev came late to a career as cartoonist, and although unpublished in his own country, his satirical drawings have exposed him to threats of "psychiatric treatment". His themes are drawn from everyday life under a ritualistic socialist state —people dwarfed by billboards and tanks; queues, shortages, black markets, miserable apartments—and from international politics, including the Olympic Games and human rights—with the two superpowers portrayed as partners in crime.*

21 June 1962

Written while working on the film "Mamma Roma"

> *I work all day like a monk,*
> *and wander through the night*
> *like an alley cat . . . looking for love.*
> *I should make an offer to the Curia*
> *to be made a saint.*
> *In fact, I reply to mystification*
> *with meekness. In my mind's eye*
> *I see the posse at the lynching.*
> *Watch myself massacred with the serene*
> *courage of a scientist. I seem*
> *to feel hatred, and instead write*
> *verses full of fastidious love.*
> *I study evil as if it were inevitable,*
> *as if it were nothing to do with me.*
> *Yes, I feel pity for young fascists,*
> *and old, whom I consider a part*
> *of the most horrible evil, I oppose*
> *only the violence of reason.*
> *Passive as a bird in flight,*
> *sunlit seas all, but with cornfies*
> *at its beam, as lightning through the sky,*
> *an inner energy that can not be stifled.*

On leaving the party

By Patrick McCarthy

PIERRE DAIX:
Les Hérétiques du PCF
350pp. Paris: Laffont.
2 221 00537 6

In *Les Hérétiques du PCF* Pierre Daix, who left the French Communist Party in 1973, has written a history of the party from the viewpoint of its dissidents. He resurrects and rehabilitates such ex-communists as Boris Souvarine, who spent years writing a book on Stalin which was published just before the Popular Front came to power and which cost the party many converts, and Jacques Doriot, who became a fascist and whom the party branded as the archetypal ex-communist—Daix shows that the Doriot of the early 1930s, however appalling a man he may have been, understood long before Maurice Thorez that the party could grow only if it became a national rather than a foreign force. Because he was mayor of the working-class Paris suburb of Saint-Denis, Doriot grasped the jacobin patriotism of the French workers and called for an alliance with the socialists to combat Hitler.

After the Liberation the communist-dominated national committee of writers blacklisted many artists who had collaborated with the Germans. It also wished to blacklist Paul Nizan, who had committed the very different crime of breaking with the PCF after the Nazi-Soviet pact: Daix vindicates both Nizan and Elio Vittorini, the Italian communist writer, who quarrelled with Togliatti. Vittorini wanted his magazine *Politecnico* to be the critical conscience of the Italian Party. Communism, he felt, was like protestantism and it should encourage its militants to use their own judgment. In condemning *Politecnico* Togliatti demonstrated that Italian communism was as Catholic as the Vatican.

Although Daix depicts his heroes well, he also betrays the weaknesses of the ex-communist. Like lapsed Catholics, ex-communists break with their church but not with the ideological way of thinking it has taught them. Daix excoriates Sartre's *L'Enfance d'un chef*, which appeared just before the Occupation, and here again the blend of humane perception and bitter irony is memorable. The final story of this section, entitled "Le droit romain n'est plus", is followed by a brief rider, appended in 1964, which appears almost to apologize for the hatred it displays against the Germans. Considering how dispassionate these particular stories are on the whole, the impression of such an emotion seems the most venial of lapses, and this final story represents such a display of virtuosity—switching as it does between the Nazis' inner tomb-

Another weakness of Daix's approach is that he brands everything he dislikes as "Russian". His fellow ex-communist, Annie Kriegel, has elaborated the concept of the counter-community: the communists are a tribe that lives quite apart from the national community. Certainly French communists are a tribe in which boys are—or at least were—enjoined to associate only with girls whose parents are party members. Only the communists can persuade their members to get up at seven o'clock on a Sunday morning to distribute their dreary newspaper *L'Humanité*. Yet the so-called counter-community could not survive unless its values reflected, in however distorted a form, the values of other French men. Patriotism and respect for authority are as much a part of Gaullism as of communism, while the mystical catechism of truths is another version of the popular cartesianism inculcated by French schools. Daix cannot blame all this on the Russians; Stalinism is not merely useful but thoroughly French as well.

Daix feels that French communism is doomed: "in 1980 it is apparent that the revitalization of the working-class movement will not be achieved through the revitalization of marxism . . . the communism cannot be reformed". Althussen's theoretical juggling cannot conceal the sad facts that the PCF has a leader who spent part of the war working for Nazi Germany, that it destroyed the promising union of the left and that it was stupid enough—the Italian communists were cleverer here—to support the Russian invasion of Afghanistan. During the 1979 European elections the French communists so far forgot their internationalism as to oppose Spain's entry to the EEC and Marchais actually went to Madrid to tell the Spanish workers that he was keeping them out for their own good.

Daix exaggerates the communists' folly because he is writing with the despair of a man who has lost his faith. If one takes the lay view, then the communists are a party like sociaiists or the Gaullists, and they are not about to disappear. Only a rash prophet would predict that Marchais, whose sneering wit goes down well among messy voters, will not get 20 per cent of the poll in the presidential elections next spring.

What has vanished is the fascination with communism and the belief in a revolution that would transform the human condition. It flickered very briefly in the mid-1970s, when the union of the left seemed to prosper, but it soon went out again. This explains why there are so few committed writers in today's France and why Sartre was such an isolated figure during the last decades of his life. Sartre continues to believe that political protest was a form of metaphysical protest: his intellect tried to conquer his freedom. This was the belief that animated the generation of committed writers from the 1930s to the late 1950s, but it has not survived in the more prosperous, stable France of de Gaulle and Giscard d'Estaing.

Indeed, even ex-communists, with their dialectical subtlety, their sense of history and their resentment at having been betrayed, are a dying breed. If the union of the left had won in 1978 they and the new philosophers, who are mostly ex-New Leftists, might have become a voice heard in the Elysée. But Giscard has no need of them, while Marchais no longer even bothers—ultimate indignity—to expel his dissidents. Anyway it is hard to be a heretic in a party whose only orthodoxy is that it must get 20 per cent of the vote.

What remains to the ex-communist is to write. Ignazio Silone never found a political home after he left the Italian Communist Party but he wrote several excellent novels. Arthur Koestler wrote nothing of literary value after he was in the party but, when he turns on the communists in *Darkness at Noon*, he writes with a special lucidity that comes from his hatred. Claude Roy's communist past provided him with the best pages of his memoirs; he looks back at Thorez and the Cold War with the wistful irony of Stendhal looking back at Napoleon. Annie Kriegel employs her knowledge of communist machinations with a sophistication that does not deserve because she remains fascinated by the party.

The same is true in *Les Hérétiques*. As a thinker Daix has nothing positive to offer. He talks about "post-communism" but he never explains what it is. He no longer believes in the party but he believes in nothing else. The edge that "there is no salvation outside the party" remains true even when the party no longer offers salvation. Yet *Les Hérétiques*, which might have been a dry book, reads well because Souvarine and Vittorini live like characters in a novel. They are Daix's elder brothers and comrades in his battle against Stalin.

David Williams (1738-1816) may be little known now but in his day he was felt by some to be an important political thinker as Tom Paine. Called the "Priest of Nature" and "the avowed champion of infidelity", he assimilated many ideas of the French Revolution, translating Voltaire and mixing in radical intellectual circles. Not the least of his achievements was the setting up of the Literary Fund (subsequently the Royal Literary Fund), which still functions today. *Incidents in my own Life which have been thought of some importance*, published by the University of Sussex Library (0 8508-7015-1), is Williams's autobiography, edited with an introduction by Peter France.

The art of artlessness

By John Lucas

ALAN SILLITOE :
The Second Chance
219pp. Jonathan Cape. £5.95.
0 224 01877 9

When Kingsley Amis recently brought out his *Collected Short Stories* he provided an introduction in which he said that he thought of the collection as "really one of ships from a novelist's work-bench". I doubt if Alan Sillitoe would want to say the same about the stories that make up his new collection, *The Second Chance*. After all, Sillitoe has always written short stories and he has several previous volumes to his credit. Yet it would be interesting to know what he thinks of the short story as an art form, what he considers its demands to be, and in what ways, if any, they differ from those made by the novel. For there is a sense in which Sillitoe's stories seem peculiarly artless. This is perhaps to say only that even the best of them work in a manner that is unusual or unorthodox. There seem to be at least two formal orthodoxies for the modern short-story, and this in spite of the fact that one regularly hears laments about the impossibility of writing short stories nowadays, because editors will not take them, and that the form has therefore died. On the contrary. Good short stories continue to be written, published and read. By and large, they follow either the pattern of the figure in the carpet, the half-hidden thread that can be traced through discrete symbol, verbal echo, juxtaposed episodes, or any combination of these; or they rely on the epiphanic, the moment of wild strawberries that suddenly makes sense of character, or character, and that explains motive or behaviour.

Sillitoe's short stories do not follow either of these patterns. Moreover, although some of them are anecdotal in a way that recalls Arnold Bennett, none is particularly strong on plot. And those which do rely on it are nearly always the weakest. In the present volume, for example, "The Meeting" and "Confrontation" are alright, would-be slick tales that hardly earn their keep: they seem to be written for the kind of magazine and audience which started up during the Edwardian period and which ceased to exist some time ago.

The title-story is clearly an ambitious and very differently conceived tale, but seems to me a complete failure. It is about a young wastrel who finds himself befriended by a Major Baxter, an elderly retired officer, and who, at his request, sets out the part of his son, to whom he bears a close resemblance. The son had been killed in the war and his mother has been unable to accept the fact. It is a complicated story and potentially a very interesting one, but Sillitoe cannot do much with it because he cannot really imagine his subject. This is how he writes of the elderly couple.

> Forever locked into each separate fire of deliberate forgetfulness was their only way of never putting [their son] out of their minds for a single instant, and kept him more alive than if they had gone through endless seasons of grieving together.

How can you be locked into a fire, what on earth is a fire of deliberate forgetfulness, and how can such a fire make for memory ("kept him more alive")? As you read through "The Second Chance" it comes more and more to have the feel of something that came out of what seemed at the time a good idea. It has about it the air of having been willed into existence, and like all acts of will it is grotesquely unnatural. It is not merely that the narrative is awkwardly written; the dialogue is wooden, inauthentic, as though Sillitoe had never listened to the speech rhythms of the kinds of people he writes about here.

Yet there is a quite different Sillitoe, one who is represented in this volume by such stories as "A Scream of Toys" and "A Time to Keep". I do not think that either story is as good as the very best Sillitoe, but that hardly matters. For both stories show that unique ability which Sillitoe perhaps first demonstrated in the remarkable "Loneliness of the Long-distance Runner" and in another early story "To Be Collected", which, if less well-known, is almost as fine. It is in stories such as these that Sillitoe's cherishable characteristics appear: an extraordinarily keen eye and ear for the ways in which certain people move and speak, and more than that, a surprisingly tender, uncondescending knowledge of the constraints within which they live.

"A Scream of Toys" seems on the face of it a very old-fashioned piece of, naturalism, a rough-cut slice of life. Set in Nottingham during the second world war, it is about a young working-class Nottingham girl who by chance meets and befriends an Italian POW. Sillitoe is good on the semi-formality of their relationship, good also on the girl's uneasy relationship with her semi-drunken parents. But what makes the story so impressive is Sillitoe's awareness of, and his ability to communicate, the emotional tension that lies under the surface of, for example, the girl's monosyllabic talk with her parents, and he marvellously shows how such tensions are increased by trivial domestic happenings, and finally break out in violence.

It is in the tale's strange, drifting, rhythm that one notes Sillitoe's apparent artlessness, and the real worth of his art. For nothing happens: there is no révélation, the story hardly seems to be a story at all. Yet in fact it has a completeness that sets it quite apart from and above such clumsy constructions as "The Second Chance" or "The Meeting". The same is true of a handful of other stories in the present volume, including "The Fiddle", and "The Sniper", both of which return Sillitoe to the familiar ground of Nottingham working-class life, but both in unfamiliar ways. It might be thought that in so often returning to this material Sillitoe is in danger of parodying himself. In fact, the parodies occur only on those occasions when he tries to produce a well-made story.

The sins of the siblings

By William Boyd

EVA JONES :
Taboo
195pp. Jonathan Cape. £6.50.
0 224 01863 9

Taboo, as the title promises, is about incest. Marie, a college student, lives in a hotel with her mother, Vincent, a famous international photographer. As the novel opens no physical intimacy has yet occurred, but a kind of dangerous flirtation is under way—both Marie and Vincent using other people to provoke jealousy and generally entice. As a result of this brinkmanship they each find themselves lumbered with a partner on what was meant to be a photographic trip to deep through North Africa. Marie is notionally paired off with Nigel—something of a wet—who tends adores her, while Vincent secures a former model of his called Emmeline, a presumably promiscuous blonde with her massive cleavage forever on display. The hapless Nigel and Emmeline are abused, attacked and manipulated as Marie and Vincent steadily metamorphose themselves into a good looking, gifted love-couple of consummate, an act that eventually results about, after much anguish and heart-searching, at the end of their African journey.

Back in England, however, the expected idyll does not ensue. The adventures of the incest taboo never are much for Marie and her body goes into a kind of psychosomatic reaction: she cannot eat, she is racked with pain and she develops full blown anorexia. On the other hand, Marie's mother and contemporary receive love, slowly. Marie leaves Angelo our eventually leaves the hospital where she has gone to have her gall stones removed and moves into the hotel with Vincent and Emmeline. Each partner then sleeps with each other in a kind of equilibrium, and moves full circle when Marie leaves for each other. She and Vincent decide to go on a cruise down the river. On the boat they make love and declare their mutual happiness. As dawn breaks Vincent goes up on deck to feed the seagulls. He flings bread into the air attracting, and driving into a frenzy, a huge flock of birds. In the course of this Vincent is badly gashed by a bird's beak. Maria rushes over to staunch the flow of blood.

> "No—don't touch it," he says. He looks into his voice but there is a childlike, excited tone to it which I have never heard before. "The gods are taking their revenge. For breaking their taboos. Don't, you understand? We must not disturb them."

Vincent—amnesiac, in manical feeding of the birds and is literally pecked to death. Marie, in a trance-like state of resignation, travels on down to the river-mouth, overdoses herself with drugs and heads the cabin cruiser out to sea.

Every novel is a sum of decisions made by the author; some decisions may be inconsequential, such as the names of minor characters, the type of meals the hero eats, and so on. Others, however, are crucial and have a vital bearing on the way we read the book. Perhaps the most significant decision an author takes on beginning a novel is whether to tell the story in the first or third person. The third person is undoubtably safer; a first person narrator presents a lot more assumptions and presuppositions in the mind of the reader and presents to the author technical difficulties and problems of consistency that he or she could possibly well do without.

Two of the major decisions taken in *Taboo* illustrate this point nicely. For a start Eva Jones has opted for first person narration—it is Marie who tells the story—and second, she has elected to narrate the events of the novel in the present tense. This course of action has obvious advantages and potentially beneficial effects. First person narration allows a conversational freedom and vividness in style (parentheses and asides to the reader, flashbacks, use of the subjunctive) which are characteristic of the best sense. The present tense enhances this closeness, giving the tale an immediacy and freshness that is harder to achieve with the past tense. However, on completing *Taboo* one is left with the impression that these important technical decisions were not considered with the seriousness they demand. First, the present tense convention is later on abandoned and then resumed in a quite arbitrary way, thereby undermining the effects of both devices and causing the reader repeatedly to reassess the position of the narrator. It's an inconsistency that becomes all the more glaring at the end of the novel when Maria actually dies in mid-sentence, completely destroying the illusions of presence and confession that the use of the first person might have fostered.

These may seem unduly fussy points, but Eva Jones's sketchiness of technique does threaten the structure of her fiction as a whole as well as the complex, tacit and essential assumptions every reader will bring to the book. Novelists, of course, can exploit or deliberately expose these assumptions, but there is no mechanical or knowing manipulation of form in *Taboo*. The technical uncertainty is, in a sense, because, despite the melodramatic intensity of the incest theme and the resolute failure of Vincent to come alive, there is which the novel is recommended to Marie's voice is indeed complex: wheedling, opinionated and self-seeking—and the travails of the ill-assorted quartet as they journey through North Africa provide moments of comic force and bizarre humour worthy of Beryl Bainbridge.

Graham Greene once wrote of R. K. Narayan: "Without him, I could never have known what it is like to be Indian." Hermann Hesse's recently released three of Narayan's novels: *The Guide* 1958 (0 434 49613 1), *The Man Eater of Malgudi* and 1961 (0 434 49601 4) and *The Vendor of Sweets* 1967 (0 434 49602 2, all £4.95).

Seven ages of woman

By Carol Rumens

EVA FIGES :
Waking
88pp. Hamish Hamilton. £3.95.
0 241 10520 X

In a number of her novels, Eva Figes's technique has been to use the intense gaze of a single, alienated character to reveal oddity and danger within the quiet routines of daily life, family life in particular. Sometimes there is an almost Murdoch-like sense of dissociation, as when Nelly Dean, in Figes's last novel *Nelly's Version* (1977), catching sight of her own ageing face in the wardrobe mirror of her hotel room, concludes that she must have been given the wrong room and that its occupant is still in situ. The typical Figes character has a power of insight into herself that somehow cannot be utilized in exchanges with other people. A sense of isolation rises almost tangibly, like a mist, from the pages.

In her latest book, *Waking*, Figes shifts her heroine's responsas further inwards. Subject and method are remulcisent of her 1974 novel *Days*, in which a bed-bound central figure endures both the heightened physical sensations accompanying illness and a feeling of mental imprisonment. Figes now reduces her character's life even more fiercely (yat sometimes ecstatically) to the bodily dimension. Echoing perhaps the Shakespearean "seven ages", there are seven chapters, each dedicated to a diffarent stage of a women's life—from idyllic early childhood to final illness. Each "age" begins with the experience of waking from a night's sleep, a useful fictional device which allows the central character to be unusually receptive to exploratina of an inner world.

It is, however, a weakness of the writing that it never quite solves the dilemma of whether the unnamed figure is to represent suffering Everywomen or to emerge as truly individualized; whether, indeed, the book is a prose-poem or a novel. The lenguage is vivid, uncluttered, elegant, but because many of the imegas used are archotypal they seem sometimes a little predictable. One misses, too, the teasing out of plot and identity which several of Figes's novels interestingly deploy, and which has caused them sometimes to be called, wrongly, thrillers.

While the modern novelin is an attractive form usually sniped at for quite the wrong motives, not least the fundamental urge to "get one's money's worth", *Waking* does seem too short, too small to fulfil its potential. It looks almost as if the narrative has been ruthlessly cut, perhaps through a wish to conform to the oeven ages proto-type. Figes jumps her character straight from adolescence to second pregnancy and an errant husband. The reader, perhaps from vulgar curiosity (but novellists ignore our vulgar curiosity at their peril), longs to know what went wrong during the intervening years, what character got on to higher education, try for a career; and, more importantly, didn't her first sexual experiences end her first child evoke "awakenings" of any kind? Surely we surely need to know why.

Waking is nevertheless a sorrowful and often beautifully written work that raises painful questions about women's place in the family and society. It is made clear that, for whatever reasons, the adolescent girl has failed to fulfil her considerable potential. This fresh, untutored, nocturnal creature with her insight into the folsities of bourgeois family life, her oceanic hunger for "beauty", her literary borrowings ("fog curled like an animal rubbing its back against the window plass") and sense of her own uniqueness seems tragically to haunt the remainder of her story.

Perhaps these perceptions of youth are no more than hormonal quirks in a menial odyssey that seems to be entirely determined by the tides and air-streams of biochemistry. A slove to her body, Figes's woman is also a slave to time. The opening pages celebrate the richness of sensation as experienced by a young child, but a crosscurrent is soon set up by her increasing awareness that this delight is threatened. Figes shows us poignantly how the different stages of growth and decay are marked by different perceptions of time, from the endless vistas of childhood (though shades of the prison-house seem to be closing round the little girl when she passionately objects to discarding an outgrown summer dress) to the reduced time-scale of the young mother who is only too capable of imagining herself at fifty.

Figes shows her characters little mercy. Her children actively reject her as she gets gracelessly ("Why don't you jump out of the window so I could have this place to myself?" her teenaged son kindly suggests). There is an overpowering sense of what is a universal human tragedy but one felt in many cultures more sharply by women than men: the paradox of a still young-seeming, changeable and uncertain self in a body rapidly running out of time and beauty. Growing old is seen by Figes as a kind of going bad; her favourite simile for ageing female flesh is milk beginning to curdle. The woman in *Waking* does not have Nelly Dean's saying knack of self-delusion. She is relentless, and unconsoled by intellectual or creative challenge. Not because she is old and ugly, but because she is wholly defiled by age and ugliness, she becomes terrifying to contemplate. As she lies dying in the final chapter, the woman imagines herself stranded on a seashore. A pinpoint of light becomes a torch: it is her mother, coming to lift her from the dark water and carry her home. It such imagery conjures up a minor Victorian novel, it must be said at once that in the context it is moving and right. The woman after all has always been haunted by her mother, and always felt herself to be treading in her footprints. Death is, in addition to all else, long been interchangeable symbols.

Figes is too subtle a writer to make loud political messages out of her feminist ideals, and she has certainly written with equal perception about male and female characters. In deploring the life of one who both sees the limitations of her position and is powerless to remedy it, she is able to reveal a poignant truth about the human condition as well as expressing powerfully the isolation of women in the traditional family structure. She is a courageous writer, whose ideas are particularly relevant to the present time. A re-issue of her earlier work, now out of print, seems overdue.

Waxwork horrors

By Julia Briggs

PETER HAINING (Editor) :
The Guest Lecture Bedside Companion
160pp. Victor Gollancz. £5.50.
0 575 0286 2

The Guest Lecture Bedside Companion (edited by the knowledgeable Peter Haining) turns out to be something of a disappointment after its dust jacket, which shows Lon Chaney as the Phantom of the Opera on one side, and the book's original cover on the other. Much of the introduction is also taken up with how that story came to be written—yet it is the one thing you will not find in this book. The alternative offerings seem rather tasteless, in every sense. They abound in gruesome details, not ingenious, at times almost incomprehensible redupliications to one crippled, revert to the cannibalism they had enjoyed during a ship wreck; another is a variation on the notorious Red Jim story, in which relatives bow one man went mad after spending the night in a waxwork museum, during the course of which he shot his best friend, who was trying to scare him. The sadistic nastiness of waxwork horrors provide an appropriate image for these tales. They date from the 1920s, when the popularity of Grand Guignol was at its height, and exhibit all the shallow sensationalism characteristic of their genre.

The JR of Dolgellau

By Kenneth O. Morgan

DAVID BENEDICTUS :
Lloyd George
222pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £5.95.
0 297 77766 1

A Strube cartoon of February 1933 shows Lloyd George greeting Henry Lytton of D'Oyly Carte as "a fellow Savoyard". He, too, has played many parts in his time, Lloyd George observes, and the cartoon depicts them: Birmingham politician and Welsh bard, Rat Catcher of Limehouse and "Ninepence for Fourpenire", journalist, farmer, attorney, wizard, court jester—and prime minister. For Lytton, it was the loving cup, "but for me, it's the bird, look you". Historians and political commentators over the past eighty years have also assigned Lloyd George a variety of roles. He has been cast as pacifist and jingo, radical and reactionary, parvisan and coalitionist, little Englander and imperialist, nonconformist and libertine, cottage-bred boy and No-good Boyd. The kaleidoscopic nature of his career between the 1890s and 1940s explains, and partly justifies, such a bewildering variety of interpretations.

But now, to launch a forthcoming BBC television serial, David Benedictus has produced a kind of novel about Lloyd George, covering selected aspects of his life down to the end of the war in 1918. Here we have, truly, a new Lloyd George, not a man of destiny, certainly not of history, but of soap opera—or perhaps *opera sebon*, to follow the pidgin Welsh with which this book is sprinkled. With a deft blend of fact, sod fautasy, sentiment and sentimentality, the author has concocted for us an everyday story of Caernarvonshire folk, with the full, predictable emphasis on bed and circuses. The television serial, if it resembles this book, ought to do well. It will offer a kind of Dallas by way of Dolgellau, with statuesque Welsh maidens keeping a welcome in the hillsides; Uncle Lloyd, the cobbler-pastor, set in Jack-like stolidity; brother William gifted with a Bobby-like absence of sense and sensibility; Maggie herself a kind of dried-out Sue-Ellan, off to launch the local lifeboat at Southfork-on-sea; Frances keeping her revolver firmly in the handbag. Others will walk-on parts include Lily Jones, with "her chestnut hair", Lizzie Davies with "heir, oh, that was the colour of honey", Catherine Edwards with "corn-coloured hair" and Mrs Pankhurst, the nature of whose coiffure is not recorded.

Even in the worst period of Lloyd George as national scapegoat—that long phase from 1922 to the mid-1960s, when a combination of Baldwin's epiphany about "dynamic forces", Asquithian long memories and long spoons, and filthy disloyalty made Lloyd George the two direst words in the political vocabulary when New College dons trembled over their port and thought of Gwynedd—when Warden Fisher uttered the dread "name—these depths were never plumbed. Now the mask of Merlin has been blown away. It reveals L.G. transmogrified into J.R., instead of the book of the film of Mr Jones we have the novel of the TV dramatisation of the myth. Truly, the Maurice debate and the coupon election have been avenged a shade after the event.

In part, what is wrong with this book is the series of unnecessary errors with which it is literered. Instance a weaving mill in the new town of Lowell, thereby she can support her family in hard times.

Lowell is a harsh and monstrous place and Emmeline is lonely and homesick, among unsympathetic boarders in a crowded lodging-house. She falls in love with the only person to be kind to her, the overseer Stephen Maguire—someone, who, as a wiser companion remarks, "only *wants* to be good, and that is about the most you can ask of a man". When she becomes pregnant she is sold off, and her baby is sent away to be fostered. Emmeline returns to Fayette but because of her secret she is unable to enter the peaceful rural life she longed for in Lowell. Marriage to the kindly Matthew Gurney promises to give her form, but the baby returns to her as a child who appears and her fate is unexpected and harrowing. Having failed to drown herself she lives on in isolation to die of cold and starvation at the age of seventy-four. The story ends with a code containing what seems to be a Christian version of hubris:

> Feelings so powerful that they could have come only from God lead some to those acts most strongly condemned by His word. It is useless to tell others that the circumstances are simple only for those who fail to see why they had to be set down.

A short prologue to the book states that Emmeline is a true story, one that "was told to the author. Whether or not this is so, Judith Rossner has made the most of her material and produced a chilling saga. Her treatment is, in the main, stark, and Emmeline's early sufferings are particularly convincing. There are also, though, some literary embellishments to show that Emmeline is a heroine and a creature of sensibility rather than a pathetic case history; these include the strong use of extreme beauty as well as the welling tears and convenient faints of popular fiction. Gods, dreams, and blots of the workings of a mystic destiny are also introduced to show the author's intentions are not purely narrative. However, the more obvious dramatic moments—such as the seduction (which is seen through Emmeline's eyes as a child's response to a need for comfort) and the birth of the baby—are confidently and tactfully handled; and the book creates its effects without ever being over-written. *Emmeline*'s strength is the power of the story itself and the feeling that its heroine might be simply part of a historical pattern of forgotten lives, betrayed, and dead.

Trouble at the mill

By Lindsay Duguid

JUDITH ROSSNER :
Emmeline
331pp. Jonathan Cape. £5.95.
0 224 01884 1

At first glance *Emmeline* seems a far cry from Judith Rossner's earlier novels, although *Looking For Mr Goodbar* and *Attachments* also dealt with themes of religion and punishment of sin. Set in the mid-nineteenth century and presented as a historical novel about the seduction of a country innocent (the dust jacket shows a wistful *Dickensian* beauty), this book is altogether stronger stuff. With overtones of *North and South* and *Precious Bane*, it tells the story of Emmeline Mosher who leaves her family in Fayette, Maine, at the age of 14 to work as a child in a weaving mill in the new town of Lowell, thereby she can support her family in hard times.

Lowell is a harsh and monstrous place and Emmeline is lonely and homesick among unsympathetic boarders in a crowded lodging-house. She falls in love with the only person to be kind to her, the overseer Stephen Maguire—someone, who, as a wiser companion remarks, "only *wants* to be good, and that is about the most you can ask of a man". When she becomes pregnant she is sold off, and her baby is sent away to be fostered. Emmeline returns to Fayette but because of her secret she is unable to enter the peaceful rural life she longed for in Lowell. Marriage to the kindly Matthew Gurney promises to give her form, but the baby returns to her as a child who appears and her fate is unexpected and harrowing. Having failed to drown herself she lives on in isolation to die of cold and starvation at the age of seventy-four. The story ends with a code containing what seems to be a Christian version of hubris:

> Feelings so powerful that they could have come only from God lead some to those acts most strongly condemned by His word. It is useless to tell others that the circumstances are simple only for those who fail to see why they had to be set down.

A short prologue to the book states that Emmeline is a true story, one that "was told to the author. Whether or not this is so, Judith Rossner has made the most of her material and produced a chilling saga. Her treatment is, in the main, stark, and Emmeline's early sufferings are particularly convincing. There are also, though, some literary embellishments to show that Emmeline is a heroine and a creature of sensibility rather than a pathetic case history; these include the strong use of extreme beauty as well as the welling tears and convenient faints of popular fiction. Gods, dreams, and blots of the workings of a mystic destiny are also introduced to show the author's intentions are not purely narrative. However, the more obvious dramatic moments—such as the seduction (which is seen through Emmeline's eyes as a child's response to a need for comfort) and the birth of the baby—are confidently and tactfully handled; and the book creates its effects without ever being over-written. *Emmeline*'s strength is the power of the story itself and the feeling that its heroine might be simply part of a historical pattern of forgotten lives, betrayed, and dead.

Back to life

By Peter Kemp

WALKER PERCY :
The Second Coming
359pp. Secker and Warburg. £6.95.
436 36664 9

Will Barrett, the central figure in Walker Percy's new novel, keeps falling over: this is appropriate, since the book itself is all about loss of balance. Derangement of various kinds dominates the story. The narrative jumps back and forth between the teemering minds of two disorientated characters. Will and Allie. Its background is a society where the abnormal seems the norm: present-day Southern USA, raucous asylum for crazy cults and manic eccentricity. Part of Will's increasing lunacy is an obsessional belief that the world—both mad and maddening—must be on the brink of Armageddon. He is proved wrong in this, but right in his expectation that a new life is about to begin—at any rate for him and Allie, the girl he has fallen in love with.

For decades, it emerges, Will has been in a state of psychological deep-freeze. Eager to escape the steamy extravaganzas of his Southern background, he has married an earnest Northerner, and trudged numbly through a life of convention and routine. Now, his wife is dead; he has retired; and symptoms of a brain disorder start to manifest themselves. The most disturbing effect of this disease—epilepsy of the temporal lobe—is the violent, random surfacing of memories from the remote past. And the most troubling thing to be thus ejected is a buried trauma which breaks shatteringly through the frozen crust of Will's psyche. This—the supposed realization that his father once tried to kill him—is, he comes to see, what has generated his long avoidance of life. Facing up to it at last, it fights back towards vitality.

He is helped in this by Allie, initially another life-avoider. Having withdrawn more and more from a world that seems imbecile, she has eventually been committed to a psychiatric hospital. There, ECT treatment has cauterized her memory—so she represents the opposite pole to Will's. He is tilted off balance by a surfeit of memory: her behaviour is shaky because of memory-deficiency. Together, they steady each other towards recovery.

Recording all this, the book takes risks and sometimes goes a bit awry. Will—a man who has not really lived since he was a child—is inevitably somewhat stilted and wild. Allie, speaking in a learnt-from-books manner, can sound mawkish: "Do you feel a smiling ease with me as well as a sweetness of me in the deep regions?" But there is more to the book than its novel.

Criminal proceedings

By T. J. Binyon

LESLIE CHARTERIS :
Count on the Saint
175pp. Hodder and Stoughton. £5.50.
0 340 25364 3

That debonair adventurer, Simon Templar, is as it again, smiling now even a twinge of arthritis as he frustrates a felonious fence in Soho, on—in the second of the two stories that make up this book—grappling with a homicidal Santa Claus in Cambridge. The narration is as bright and breezy as ever, but the Saint seems a bit out of place in modern Britain, and rather lost, too, without his former constant companions: the beautiful Patricia Holm, and Hoppy Uniacke—the only man who could make a dent in a cannon ball with his skull.

STUART KAMINSKY :
The Howard Hughes Affair
207pp. Severn House. £5.50.
0 7278 0604 1

Los Angeles, 1941, and private eye Toby Peters is hired by Howard Hughes to discover who has been peaking surreptitiously at his latest airplane design. Basil Rathbone and Sherlock Holmes, Peters's Watson, lens Russell pokes a cantilevered bosom for a moment into the story; Brecht in Californian exile gives the hero a vital clue. In a word, a jaky (and jerky), reasonably amusing period lark, suffering from a terminal form of the Sherlock Brown syndrome, first identified by Max Beerbohm, and described in an immortal stage direction: "Enter Michael Angelo. Andrea del Sarto appears for a moment at a window. Pippa passes."

ALAN E. ESMER :
The Midnight Men
190pp. Robert Hale. £5.75.
0 7091 8648 7

Researcher Jake LaFarge—strange name for a hero—is hired ostensibly to write a history of the Schofield family, but really to find out why Ursula Francis, née Schofield, threw herself out of the window of her Knightsbridge flat back in 1949. Jake is soon up to his neck in high finance and higher politics and, in no time, is being pulled round London by an ex-Nazi with a limp and a swordstick. The fine detail is put in a bit sluggishly, but otherwise a lively tale, narrated by Jake, his slavishness and individual voice

The ethnographical encounter

By James Clifford

VINCENT CRAPANZANO :
Tuhami—Portrait of a Moroccan
187pp. University of Chicago Press. £10.50.
0 226 11870 3

Since the publication in 1967 of Malinowski's notorious diary, anthropologists have written with growing frankness about the dilemmas, anxieties, and political constraints of fieldwork. A new ethnographic sub-genre, the fieldwork account, is already well established. But with only a handful of exceptions, these accounts have been kept clearly separate from the ethnographies whose production they chronicle. Vincent Crapanzano's book ceases this separation while making a powerful case for the place of self-reflexivity in all ethnographic writing. It is not a question of confession, but of recognizing and making manifest the extent to which anthropological data refer not to a represented other reality but to the research process itself—to its specific dialectics of power, translation, and interpersonal exchange.

"Tuhami" is the fictional name of a real Moroccan. Illiterate, a day-labourer in a small tile factory, he lives alone alongside his workplace in a windowless shack. Though Tuhami is a loner, he is never alone. In the immediate vicinity of his hovel are the tombs of forty-four local saints, divinities who protect the plains from a multitude of evils. Tuhami pays regular visits to saints' tombs, where he sleeps, searching his dreams for advice that can help him with his troubles. His world is also populated with *jinn*, demons who perturb, censor, and extract various forms of compliance from their victims. Tuhami cannot always distinguish saints from *jinn*, and different states of possession yield to one another in jolting, bewildering sequences.

Tuhami is locked in a desperate battle for control of his psychomythic existence. The figure who holds him in the deepest thrall is a camel-footed she-demon, 'Aisha Qandisha, a *jinn* who assumes many names and forms. Seductive and fearful, she can appear as a stranger or friend; she is perhaps the only lover Tuhami has ever known; she may represent all women. In any case, she will not permit him to have normal sexual relations with another. Tuhami is thus a social failure, unable to lead a normal masculine life. He cannot marry and father children. At times he accepts his fate, as "written", but at other times Tuhami yearns desperately for release.

One of the virtues of Crapanzano's engrossing, troubling account is its portrayal of Tuhami's possession in a manner that preserves an intractable strangeness. This is accomplished, moreover, without freezing bizarre experiences into a distanced or aestheticized otherness. Tuhami remains a very human interlocutor, intriguing, charming, unpredictable. The text, which reports a series of interviews, is not an authoritative revelation of Tuhami's life story. Rather it describes a process of dialogue in which interlocutors actively negotiate a shared version of reality. Crapanzano suggests that this active mutual construction must be at work in any ethnographic encounter, but that participants tend to assume they have simply occulesced to the reality of their counterpart. Thus, for example, the ethnographer of the Trobriand Islanders does not openly concoct a version of reality in collaboration with his informants but rather interprets to his readers (and to himself in his role as author) the "Trobriand point of view". Crapanzano's study is a sophisticated attempt to break down this kind of literary and hermeneutical convention.

In the process, the ethnographer's authority as narrator and interpreter is questioned. In dense theoretical discussions interspersed between the sections of reported dialogue, Crapanzano offers trenchant analyses of the transactions and power relations of fieldwork. He draws, without purti pris, on a variety of modern critical traditions, including psychoanalysis (Lacan), existentialism (Sartre or Genet), and semiology. Indeed the presentation of theory is exemplary. Abstract discussions of "the Other" or of the fictionalizing process are interspersed in montage form within the narrative. They do not appear as final explanations of Tuhami's case but as evidence of the ethnographer's psychic world, as partial understandings, stopgaps against the confusions and anxieties elicited by the research situation.

Not the least of the anxieties Crapanzano portrays is that in the notion of realism, sharply revealed here as a Western convention. The interviews were to have resulted in a biography, or, in social science jargon, a "life history". But the effort of the encounter was to undermine the expected meanings of both "life" and "history". Initially interested in what actually happened in Tuhami's life, Crapanzano sharply distinguished the real from the imaginary or divine. His psychoanalytic bent had prepared him to search for a developmental etiology of Tuhami's "illness", for a central trauma and a series of consequences. In principle, it should have been possible to determine the core, or at least the boundaries of the person "Tuhami", to narrate the real events of his life, to understand divinities and *jinn* as the projections of a psyche. It should also have been possible to separate Tuhami's true history from the research encounter that produced it.

Crapanzano chronicles the progressive destruction of these assumptions. As Tuhami's interlocutor, he constantly confronts a confusion of reality and fiction, truth and hallucination. Tuhami's stories slip in and out of trance and dream. Crapanzano presents these stories, all in some sense true, with a minimum of explanation. There is a disturbing dream-like quality to his text—rapid shifts of scene, tone, and perspective challenging the reader to accept a situation in which "the real was a metaphor for the truth—not identical with it".

Crapanzano's beautifully unconclusive book advances the genre of ethnographic writing, too long tied to naturalist and realist conventions of literary presentation. The dilemma of *Tuhami* is modernist. An openly experimental text, it searches for a form adequate to the reality produced by overdetermined ethnographic encounters. In the tense collage of its parts we confront as readers something of Tuhami's experience of a fragmented reality that need not, finally, cohere. But what of the ethnographer's reality, the narrative that figures his peace of mind and presents the comprehensible outcome of his research experience? Here Crapanzano leaves us with questions.

As the interviews progress, the ethnographer begins to raise the extent of his informant's unhappiness, and he finds himself cast in a therapeutic role. Tuhami's cavils turns confer a responsibility to advise, even to cure. At times, Indeed, Crapanzano appears somewhat too content with his position as therapist, provoker of a confessional discourse. But he will see this stable role dissolve. He loves Tuhami, wants to help . . . is helpless. He must leave. Crapanzano's is one of a very few fieldwork accounts that examine seriously the problem of departures. The ethnographer is, by definition, a participant who departs. The rupture with Tuhami is moving and ambiguous. Crapanzano does not hide his own ethically exposed position, Tuhami's mysterious and probably tragic fate will leave his ethnographer without explanations—with only a cure of writing.

Reaching and laughing

By T. O. Beidelman

ROBERT D. PELTON :
The Trickster in West Africa
A Study of Mythic Irony and Sacred Delight
312pp. University of California Press. £15.
0 520 03477 5

This volume examines the trickster as he appears in the oral literature of the Ashanti, Fon, Yoruba and Dogon of West Africa in order to show "that the trickster is not an archetypical figure, but a symbolic pattern that like the High God or the Divine Mother, includes a wide range of individual figures". Robert D. Pelton asks "how does one uncover the meaning the trickster has come to have for people with a rich, complex religious life, who know the trickster as a figure of the margins yet somehow of the center?". He finds his answers in "the language of analogy, of corresponding levels of thought yoked together in an irony that demonstrates its own truth by its capacity to engender life, to realize life's doubleness in society and history as well as in the mind".

The preceding quotations suggest both the strengths and weaknesses of this work, which appears to be a revised doctoral dissertation based on re-analysis of the available literature on these four societies, as well as a brief review of some past attempts to analyze the concept. The work's virtues lie in the fact that the writer's "piety", "reverence" deep and generous sense of religion in the fullest meaning of that term. Throughout he strives to find metaphysical truths in these tales and at times gratuitously scolds the reader for his impiety. The story of the trickster is best understood by keeping him firmly situated within the cultural context, but only then "neither methodologies nor a purely descriptive morphology will disclose the deeper meanings". Unfortunately, his reliance on library material severely limits the sociological and linguistic apparatus he can bring to bear, and consider-ing these shortcomings, we are left with the usefully perceptive and promising suggestions for further investigation.

The author's own religiosity has undoubtedly led him from the excesses of structuralism and psychology, although at times his translations of Dogon myths, for example, do not do justice regarding the history of religious whatever as a subject, with some variation, and most anthropology favors the synchronic. Pelton's chapter on the Dogon, however, with its discussion of the history of Nommo, is the most satisfying section of the book.

While the author is right to urge "total analysis" it is difficult to accept his work as meeting this standard, based only on a handful of texts are briefly discussed and where relatively little space may be devoted to any one society. Furthermore, by the end Pelton has gradually moved from generalizations about West Africa (rash enough) to unfounded statements about African beliefs in general. Yet the analyses remain more acute in some of their thrusts than much that has appeared elsewhere.

The author's background is clearly more firmly set in theology and literary criticism than in either social anthropology or philosophy, although he is obviously acquainted with writers within these latter fields. For example, it is doubtful whether a sophisticated anthropologist would argue that "the hunter in his very embeddedness in the wild, by his very kinship with the animals, feels most vividly the distance from nature" — these opinions apparently being based on such questionable sources as Laurens van der Post, Paul Shepard and Colin Turnbull, while far more detailed and reliable reports are ignored. Similarly, Pelton's distinctions between mind and society, or social being and deeper being, and his assertion that certain social processes are "more than human just because they are truly human", would make many concerned with the sociology of knowledge cringe.

Finally, the author repeatedly urges analyses that avoid ethnocentrism, yet would membere of the societies he discusses subscribe to his conclusion that "this love to contradict, this passion to rise and mock, is what makes him, in the trickster an image of transforming joy as he weaves his web of purpose and dances his dance of delight, is nothing less simple and complex than love": Indeed, it is a problem to be euro what he here means by love.

Certainly there is no useful anthropological, sociological or psychological rejoinder to the kind of mystifying conclusion which Pelton reaches, by which, supposedly in accordance with Turner and Douglas, he characterizes ritual (and presumably literature) as "a way of expressing the inexpressible" that Africans have indirectly, almost off-handedly, developed a metaphysics of delight, a way of reaching into the ungraspable and describing its nature by the laughter that greets the teacher as he slowly opens his clenched fist to reveal—nothing". As a reviewer I can do no more than quote: "The Buddha's smile, Zen masters pranks, Heidegger's ponderous linguistic somersaults, and especially Lévi-Strauss's concern in various ways proclaim that nonsmilingness will never have the last word because it is the last laugh." Are we to consider Christ an ultimate trickster and the trickster metaphor as the hoax of all religions, not just prominent in some such as the Yoruba? And surely religion involves more than joy.

Anthropologists, folklorists, theologians and humanists may find this study interesting. Its suggestive comments and intense effort to understand alien concepts mitigate the purple prose and muddled analysis.

The paths of possession

By I. M. Lewis

RICHARD EVENS SCHULTES and ALBERT HOFMANN :
Plants of the Gods
192pp. Hutchinson. £12.95.
0 09 141600 0

GILBERT ROUGET :
La musique et la transe
Esquisse d'une théorie générale des relations de la musique et de la possession
Paris : Gallimard.

Religious ecstasy, possession, and trance can be relied upon to raise controversy. Certainly, it is difficult to imagine approaches to these topics which have less in common in style and content than those proposed in the two books reviewed here... *Plants of the Gods* is a lavishly illustrated coffee-table guide to hallucinogenic plants by the Harvard ethno-botanist, Richard Schultes, and the chemist Albert Hofmann, who discovered LSD. This unpretentious, practical account reads almost like Percy Throwes when contrasted with Gilbert Rouget's dense, portentous study, *La musique et la transe*. The two scientists are concerned to show how naturally occurring psychotropic drugs produce ecstatic effects because they are similar in molecular structure to brain hormones. Rouget, who is an ethno-musicologist at the Musée de L'Homme in Paris, attacks the work of Neher and others on the convulsive effects which drumming is claimed to induce through its influence on the alpha rhythm of the brain. In contrast to drugs, in Rouget's view, the literally entrancing effect of music is not to be explained in mechanical neurophysiological terms. Music, he argues at great length, is more important in "socializing" trance than in triggering it.

Before examining Rouget's meandering account, let me say that Schultes and Hofmann do not entirely discount the effect of social and cultural factors on drug-induced mystical experience. The core of their book is a well-illustrated (but not, I think, exhaustive) lexicon of ninety-one plants with known or assumed psychotropic properties. This is followed by a more extended discussion of fourteen major hallucinogenic plants (ranging from Fly Agaric to *Cannabis*) and includes some brief ethnographic indications of their ritual significance in various cultural settings. The treatment here is somewhat patchy and sketchy and the pictures are often more revealing than the text. A rather original claim is made for the *Iboga* drug cult of Bwiti in Gabon. This, we are told, helps its members to "resist the vertiginous transition from the individualism of traditional tribal life to the collectivism of the encroaching western civilization". (Descriptions of pre-Zulonsan Africa, at this level of banality, usually of course contrast the healthy collectivism of traditional society with Western individualism.) Schultes and Hofmann conclude by presenting an admirably clear account of the chemical structure of hallucinogens. They also refer briefly to the controversial use of hallucinogenic drugs in psychiatric treatment and in helping terminally ill patients to come to terms with death through drug-induced religious experience.

Rouget's work, subtitled "Sketch of a general theory of the relations between music and possession", is one of those diffuse, wordy books which one doggedly ploughs through in the hope of ultimately encountering some piercing new discovery. The author, whose handling of other people's ethnographic data is not very sure-footed, falls into what is rapidly becoming an occupational hazard among those who attempt cross-cultural treatments of possession and trance, namely an excessive concern for making inappropriate and misleading distinctions between phenomena. Thus we are told at the outset that trance is to be distinguished from ecstasy. Contrary to what might be expected, trance for Rouget is an agitated, active state associated with noise and sociability. (A later, contradictory passage in the book, however, associates trance with lethargy.) Ecstasy, which is of course superior, is by contrast a motionless state of grace, achieved in silent solitude.

This contrast is modelled on St Teresa's distinction in her celebrated account of her own mystical experiences between "union" (=trance) and "rapture" (=full ecstasy). This is actually a distorted abridgment of St Teresa's personal mystical scheme: for like the sociologist of ritual, Van Gennep, she in fact distinguishes *three* stages or phases: union, rapture and the culminating "wound of love", seeing these as successive episodes of one experience. Ignoring this, Rouget sticks to his dichotomy between "trance" and "ecstasy" and proceeds to develop one of those laundry-lists of illusory oppositions which we associate with Lévi-Strauss and the French structuralists. With ecstasy are grouped: lack of motion, silence, solitude, the absence of trauma or crisis, sensory privation, and—on the positive side—hallucinations (during the event) and recall (after it). Trance in contrast is linked not only with movement, noise, and sociability, but also with trauma, overstimulation, lack of hallucination and, afterwards, amnesia.

The significance of this dichotomy, for those who are interested in the relation between religious experience and its ambient social circumstances, is rendered somewhat "problematic" by Rouget's observation that ecstasy and trance stand at opposite poles of a continuum. Rather state can be experienced by the person in different religious contexts within the same religious tradition. The crucial point, however, is that for Rouget trance is linked with music while ecstasy is not.

What, then, is the relationship between music and trance? Before answering this further distinctions have to be made. Via the Belgian structuralist anthropologist Luc de Heusch, Rouget follows the dichotomy drawn by Mircea Eliade between shamanism and possession. The inspired priest or Shaman (to use the classic Tungus term which now seems likely to be of Vedic origin—see Carmen Blacker, *The Catalpa Bow*, London, 1975, pages 317-18) flies to the world of the spirits. He is a master of spirits and achieves trance by making his own music. This active role is the opposite of the passive role of the possessed who, with appropriate musical accompaniment, involuntarily and submissively falls into trance. If, as Rouget is forced to recognize from the ethnographic reports he reviews, there are in practice "all sorts of intermediary forms" the distinction between shamanism and possession remains "fundamental".

Rouget next distinguishes between various kinds of trance and, after much meandering discussion, correctly notes the significance of the *involuntary* nature of the initial experience which heralds and launches the possession career. Since, however, ultimately "possession is in all cultures and settings a theory or interpretative of behaviour and not something that can be directly observed like trance, it is clearly inappropriate to speak of the initiatory crisis as "proto-possession" when those concerned say that someone is possessed! The point is that trance and possession overlap but do not invariably coincide. Even such mildly abnormal conditions as constipation are in some cultural traditions interpreted as a sign of possession by a spirit or divinity and when the person concerned is in no sense in a trance state. Of course, subsequent treatment, usually but not invariably involving music, may lead the "possessed" person to fall into trance. To some extent Rouget sees the problem and tries to resolve it by speaking, inappropriately, of "pre-possession", and "obsession", the latter term leaving open the question of whether recourse will be had to exorcising the intrusive spirit, or to domesticating it.

Following other students of the subject, Rouget rightly recognizes that the latter procedure typically leads the possessed person to join a spirit cult so that the initial crisis, diagnosed as possession, becomes retrospectively an initiation. However, it is obviously wrong to argue that "possession" only comes into play after exorcism has been rejected. As the source on exorcism in our own Christian tradition testify, "possession" by an evil spirit regularly reaches a climax just before exorcism is achieved. The real distinction here is between possession without trance and trance accompanying possession.

A quarter of the way through this sage, we learn that there is no evidence of any particular musical instrument being especially associated with possession. We are also told that acceleration of tempo is universally employed to trigger trance. However this effect is not attributable to specific structural musical features. Here Rodney Needham's ideas about the neurophysiological impact of percussion get some savage knocks and Neher's alpha-rhythm drum-beats are fiercely rejected. If the precise link between cause and effect thus remains obscure for Rouget, what can be said is : "Music and dance constitute precisely the principal means of socializing this hysteria, of institutionalizing it, in brief of giving it the stereotyped forms of trance." Rouget invokes the authority of Plato to develop his own "theory" that, being at once the signal of trance and the support of dance, music has as its essential role "to permit the public and lived [*vécu*] identification of the possessed [person] with the God who possesses him". We are then taken on a long excursion into theatre and opera, following in the footsteps of Rouget's distinguished mentor, the French surrealist poet and ethnographer, Michel Leiris. "Opera can be seen as the last avatar of possession ceremonies and the opera singer the last of those roles played by the possessed." Particularly in the context of pop music (of which the author is not entirely unaware since he mentions the Beetles) this seems a premature judgment.

This correspondence is emphasized rather charmingly in a long letter written (but apparently not dispatched) by a Benin ethno-musicologist "describing his astonishment at the similarity between performances of *The Magic Flute* or *Don Giovanni* at the Paris Opera and the Nigerian *Bori* possession cult. As this enonymous writer puts it: "In Voodoo (or other African cults) possession expresses itself in dance and in the opera in song." It is very odd indeed that this parallel between what Rouget calls "lyric possession" (Western opera) and "religious possession" is not pursued with reference to ballet. But then there are many odd things in this book.

A long final section discusses possession and trance in Islam. Here the text darts back and forth between classic treatises by celebrated Sufi mystics (eg, al-Ghazzali) and ethnographic accounts of contemporary Sufi cults in North Africa, as well as the author's own impressions of a stage performance of the Mevlevi whirling dervishes. The Islamic *dhikr* (literally, remembrance) which, when celebrated privately, Rouget considers corresponds to his concept of ecstasy, contains *three* stages, a contradiction which, like many others in his data, escapes him. He is also wrong to claim that Islamic *dhikr* ritual gatherings, where the congregation repetitiously intone "Allah", are invariably "inclusively linked to music and dance". Some Islamic religious orders do employ music (eg, drumming in certain branches of the Qadariye Order); others do not, and frequently, except in the more exhibitionist cults, there is no dancing at all.

With this uncertain grasp of the Islamic material, it is perhaps not surprising that Rouget's laborious efforts to find Sufi equivalences between Plato's four types of mania (telestic, or ritual; mantic or divinatory; poetic; and erotic) should seem so contrived and unconvincing. Thus, for instance, he concludes that what corresponds in Islam to Plato's concept of erotic enthusiasm is *wajd*, neglecting the fact that what Muslims interpret as possession by *jinn* (evil spirits) is often also strongly erotic. This questionable correspondence between Greek and Arab theories of trance and possession takes us back to Christian enthusiasm and to the bold conclusion that "the system of relations between trance and music in Islam applies equally effectively to Christianity".

Returning at last to the object of our shamanic quest, the relation between music and trance, we learn that music's great achievement is to be able to induce trance in the manner that an electric current can set a tuning-fork vibrating with the same frequency. We are not of course to take this literally, given Rouget's strong hostility towards reductionist theories involving neurophysiological responses. So it would be a fundamental error to reduce these diverse forms of trance to diverse forms of bodily technique, using diverse combinations of song and dance. . . . The technique only works because it is at the service of a belief and because trance constitutes a cultural model, integrated within a certain general representation of the world".

Finally, Rouget claims that music is "indispensable for providing the cult member with the means of manifesting [his] identification [with divinity] and hence externalizing his trance". This he contends is because "music is the only language which speaks at the same time to the head and the legs, because it is through it that the group presents the individual with a mirror in which to read the image of his borrowed identity, and because it thus permits the individual to return this identity in the form of dance". But music is less significant in triggering than in sustaining trance and "permits it to open out [flourish]". With such a vague conclusion to such a protracted study, it is evident that Rouget takes his readers on a journey on which travelling, hopefully is the order of the day. But even this upcouraging advice to travellers is unfortunately misleading here. It is profoundly disappointing that we learn so little about music's (by no means unique) role in stimulating and sustaining trance.

The message of this work, which might have been delivered with greater effect more succinctly, is that there is, at present, no evidence to indicate that any particular musical instrument or particular rhythm automatically induces trance. The book has a good bibliography and discography and a delightful preface by Michel Leiris.

As the situation demands

By Eva Gillies

J. S. EADES :
The Yoruba Today
188pp. Cambridge University Press. £10.50. (paperback, £3.95).
0 521 22656 2

Writing a general book about the Yoruba, reflects the author cuefully in his preface, is a foolhardy enterprise." This is in fact the first such book written for a number of years; for a study of comparable scope one would have to go back to Lloyd's *Yoruba Land in the Yoruba*, which though not published until 1970, was composed in the 1930s. Not that the gap reflects any hiatus in Yoruba studies as such; on the contrary, the literature has been flooded with books and articles on Yoruba history, Yoruba economics Yoruba psychiatry, craft associations, deities, divination, on weaving and cloth, structured oral poetry and responses to fluctuations in the price of cocoa—much of it in days written by the Yoruba themselves. The problem has been to keep on with it, let alone bringing it down and inserting it into some sort of coherent view of this fascinating people.

This J. S. Eades has now done, and quite moreover with a place among the history of Nigeria. Relatively short, it is indeed, refreshingly free of the jargon of the social sciences, distinguishing it from many other contributions to the subject—of how its gradually unfolding literature, from Johnson's monumental nineteenth-century *History* to the very latest article on elite child-rearing practices has itself grown out of a series of concrete social and political situations. His own fieldwork, both within Nigeria itself and among Yoruba migrants in Ghana, plays neatly into this framework. For many new ethnographers still edging the widened, first-time-ever, Tropicbird-ing approach towards their material; Mr Eades by contrast uses his data in a workmanlike fashion, as a handy tool for the main job of reassessing and improving existing models of Yoruba society and culture.

But the "today" in his title implies, happily, rather more than a mere unfolding of received wisdom about social organization, settlement patterns, economic stratification and the rest: it is seen as a moment in time, part of an historical process whose roots lie centuries back and whose outcome must still be uncertain. This approach enables Eades, among other achievements, to say something genuinely new and useful about that much-vexed pseudo-problem, Yoruba urbanism, and to say it, moreover, in the simplest, most readily understandable language.

This interest in the "Advances in Semiotics" series is *The Signifying Animal: The Grammar of Language and Experience*, edited by Irmengard Rauch and Gerald F. Carr (296pp. Indiana University Press. £14.95. 0 253 18405 7). It is a collection of essays divided under six different topics: "Defining Language", "The Language Act", "Pragmatics, Semantics, Syntax", "The Peircean Categories of Firstness, Secondness, Thirdness in Language", "The Language Jokes in Nonverbal Communication", "Language Likeness in Animate Existence", "Language, Art, and Crossroads of Linguistics and Semiotics".

Provisional conclusions

By C. H. Sisson

ANDREW MOTION:
The Poetry of Edward Thomas
193pp. Routledge and Kagan Paul. £8.95.
0 7100 0471 0

The poetry of Edward Thomas was written during the years 1914-17. It was published posthumously in volume form in 1917 and 1918; there were *Collected Poems* edited by Walter de la Mare in 1920, *Selected Poems* edited by David Garnett in 1927, and further editions of *Collected Poems* in 1928 and 1936, the latter edition (Faber) reaching its tenth impression in 1969. Edna Longley's edition, with more notes then text, appeared in 1973, and the Grand Tombstone with variant readings in 1978. Thomas is hardly an obscure figure. The publishers of the present volume say that his readers "include not only professional critics but a considerable number of enthusiasts", and we believe them. (What poet, one wonders, was ever read only by "professional critics"? *Abit omen.*) Thomas has been one of the most accessible of twentieth-century poets, with readers of all kinds—people who take a book in their pockets and might be going anywhere except to a seminar. One hopes he still is, but with younger generations he has come also to academic exposition and judgment, a fate he would, perhaps, have regarded ruefully.

In a letter of 1908 to Gordon Bottomley, Thomas says that "if it were not for the blank necessity of keeping a house and household going" he would "have nothing to do with books". The cry was uttered under the pressure of excessive reviewing, and no doubt the sentiment is exaggerated, but any reader of Thomas can see that he was a man who bankered for the sensible world. The impulse to discard books is at least as important as the desire to read them, and Thomas's study of Walter Pater is as good as it is because it is motivated by a desire to get out from under this once obsessive influence. The drive to strip his mind of words which stood between him and reality found its resolution at last in listening to them together. That Thomas understood that this is what he had to do, six or seven years before he succeeded in doing it, is clear from his saying to Bottomley: "Poetry in verse is, at one with the tides and pulse, prose is chaos cut up into beds & borders and fountains and musicwork like a garden." It is tempting to believe that had the pressure of hack-work been less, Thomas would have starved to write poetry sooner than he did.

Andrew Motion certainly assumes this. "Hardship delayed its appearance until his final two years", he says; and elsewhere he speaks of "sufficient tranquillity to write poems earlier". But all such speculations detract from the seriousness of any criticism, for the only subject of study is what the poet actually did do. The poems as we have them are those of a man who did not have tranquillity and who had come to take "hardship" for granted. The poet of 1915-and 1916 was a grown-up who could say, writing from France: "One gets—I mean I get—along moderately well, as ever, more, with all sorts of uncongenial people".

The width of Thomas's sympathy is the counterpart of his profound realism and this sympathy extended to past and future as well as to the present. To that extent Mr Motion's thesis, in general is carried to substantial effect. The continuity assumed by Thomas's work—it is knowing the spirit of it when he speaks of "the sudden disappearance of its immortally cultural spirit" in the "modern world that changed earlier Empires, Rome on all the time, and faster perhaps in our time than in any other, but there was no sudden disappearance of Thought, that the good fortune to live in Oxford might be established at a time when the roads were relatively empty and most of the traffic was on the railways, but the country still was, except for the highways of Roman origin, impassable. The man who could write "Adlestrop" was the man who could write the without irony "To end war" was the man representative of a re

Crusades or Caesar's battles'" would have thought of our contemporary threats in much the same way.

Motion has a chapter on Thomas as "Patriot and War Poet" and rightly emphasizes the "settled, mystic patriotism" which his shared with Coleridge and Blake, as against the "bombastic, hypocritical or senseless" expressions which were common enough at the time—as they are, mutatis mutandis, in the discussion of public concerns at all times. The decency and abnegation of Thomas's attitude, combined with a profound territorial attachment, is not peculiar to him; it is the same which moved Ivor Gurney to call his volume *Severn & Somme*, "by Ivor Gurney, Private, of the Gloucesters", and certainly these poets were, in these matters, speaking for others besides themselves. Only one of Thomas's poems was written in France; "of his twenty-two months as a soldier", Motion points out,

> all but forty days were spent training in England. During this time he provided a more balanced, complete and articulate account of his experience than any given by his contemporaries. It is a many-faceted record, and a unique one, being far removed in circumstances and intention from those handed down by poets who more confidently claimed the title of war poet.

The accidents which brought it about that Thomas's career as a poet fell wholly within the period of the war end was practically coextensive with his life as a soldier certainly effected the nature of his utterance, but they can have done no more than give a slight twist to the matter and the manner which had been formed by the thirty-six years before he started to write the poems. Motion (like Eidon Longley before him) has sought out in the long trail of prose books hints which were taken up in the verse. The material was collected, as a poet's materials must be, unintentionally. More important than any parallels is the mere fact of Thomas's having laboured for so many years at his prose, in books and articles he did not want to write. The sobriety and integrity with which he carried out this work is something rarely matched in his time or in any time, and without it the quality of his verse would not have been what it is. Thomas came to verse as a man thoroughly and meticulously trained in the use of language, and utterly free from showoff. Moreover, through those early years he had—what the excessive encouragement of verse in our day does not encourage—an almost religious regard for poetic talent and a sense of the unlikelihood of being able to do anything in that line himself.

The question of the part played by Robert Frost in the loosening of his poetic tongue has come to occupy an important place in discussion of Thomas's work. Motion devotes a lucid and well-documented chapter to this subject—a subject which certainly need not excite the partisanship it has sometimes done, on one side of the Atlantic or the other. Thomas's encounter with the American poet, at the precise moment when he did, encouraged him, was a piece of singular good fortune. While he was still tongue-tied, there he was face to face with a poet only a few years older than himself with whom he felt himself profoundly in sympathy, and who had made use of technical liberties of a kind suited to his own cast of mind. Frost's statement that "anything we may be thought to have in common we had before we met" is no doubt correct, and indeed it could hardly have been otherwise, with two men on the wrong side of thirty-five. Frost recommended that Thomas should "use passages in his prose books as the framework on which to build poems". That was in the winter of 1913, when Frost was also advising Thomas not to divorce his wife.

Thomas did not seek a divorce, but neither did he at once start turning his prose into verse. The first poem was written in December 1914. There were "no possible deliberate models", as he said, but "difficulty in changing from prose to poetry was considerable" and "we had still the moment when to

him. Motion, who has done his reading thoroughly, draws attention to a review of a book on metrics Thomas wrote at the age of twenty-four. The author, Thomas says, "speaks of 'thought moments' instead of 'phrases' because 'it is important here to dissociate them from words and to think of them as groups of notions'. . . . It is not a new system of prosody, though it makes the old one ridiculous". There is no doubt that Thomas had thought hard about metrical practice before he came to write verse himself. Motion writes of his taking "the natural English line not as the five regular feet of the iambic pentometer, but as eight to twelve syllables which avoided repeating patterns of weak and strong stress". But it is a long way from theory to practice, and the impact of Frost's performance must have been very great, and no doubt helped to shake Thomas into writing verse himself.

Metrics is not a matter on which many people have anything sensible to say and it is the more creditable that Motion's chapter on Frost and "The Sound of Sense" is really the core of his book. He sees Thomas's sentences serving "as long, flexible wires which conduct rhythm through whole poems or parts of poems. And it is not", he adds, "only his speaking cadence which is thus conveyed; the frequent pauses and hesitations convey his state of mind as well as his tone of voice". Elsewhere he speaks of Thomas's "variable blank-verse line 'employing' patterns of stress and pause which reflect a mind actually engaged in the act of thinking, rather then offering concluded thoughts". It would be difficult better to characterize Thomas's verse, for "concluded thoughts" he did not have, only actions which are a kind of provisional conclusion.

It was F. R. Leavis, in *New Bearings in English Poetry*, who first gave academic respectability to Thomas's work. The subject must have been a recalcitrant one, for that was in 1932, and it has taken nearly fifty years to produce this "first full length study to devote itself entirely" to Thomas's poetry. If one has oneself come to Thomas's work, as indeed to other poetry, through inspection of the work itself, through a recommendation or at most an enthusiastic essay, one cannot be entirely convinced of the necessity for so much exposition but, given the existence of the genre, one must say that Andrew Motion has done his work well and that there should be no call for such another study for some time to come.

With Motion the subject has run its full academic course, from thesis under the supervision of John Fuller "at the University of Oxford" to book written at the University of Hull and read by Dr Philip Larkin—under all the auspices, therefore. The "Introduction" does perhaps have a little too much about it of the academic case to be proven, for it presents Thomas in a battle array of "Modernists" and "Georgians". The singularly irrelevant figures of Alfred Austin and Sir Henry Newbolt pop up as "imperialists" who "fought a rear-guard action on behalf of Victorian values" picked against "the experiment" of "the Bard Bound and Tied". All this is good sporting stuff but more important is the fact that Thomas was ten years older than Eliot, so it is surely time to let the dust fall on the party rows at the first quarter of the century, no more important than the battles of the kings of Oz on our own day. Criticism "actually identifying weaknesses in the Georgians themselves . . . has", we are told, "tended misrepresenting those who were only loosely connected with them. Among the casualties of this general condemnation Thomas is pre-eminent". The moral would seem to be not to waste too much time on the critics, but have a look at the work they criticize. And the truth is that Thomas has survived well enough among the mere readers, many of whom did not know that he was supposed to be a casualty.

POSTAGE: INLAND 11p; ABROAD 13p

This striking portrait of Anthony Butts, by Nina Hammett, is showing at the Michael Parkin Gallery, 11 Motcomb Street, London SW1, with works by some thirty artists—including William Strong, Jacques-Emile Blanche and Roger Fry—reflecting the period in British art from the First to the Second World Wars.

On the Use of the Masculine-Preferred

By Tom Disch

In the French language night
Is a woman and day is a man,
And no poet or poetess can escape
The implications. We are free
Who speak English from wondering why
Our hands, though masculine in form,
Are, even so, feminine nouns.
Nor are the women of England saddled
With all those dismissive diminutives,
Those -less's and -ina's. In England
Maria becomes Mary, which rhymes
Democratically with eight man's names;
Hare (or thore) into cat be teased discreetly
As to the gender of Joyces and Jerrys.

It is from respect for our tongue's genius
For good manners that I would resist
Any rush to reform the supposition
That "one" and "anyone" are men.
Consider such a phrase as "anyone
Who has lost his or her temper":
What begins as an effort to be fair—
There's no quibbling that "anyone"
May be a woman—ends by introducing
An extraneous element of ambiguity—
That suggestion that someone has lost
His or her temper because of a confusion
Of sex-roles.

It is a lovely language,
English. One senses, instinctively, listening
To it, that it was created, like chromosomes,
In strict parity by women and by men;
By Mother Goose and Father Time
With their long memories, by the quick
Coequal wits of Mirabell and Millamant,
By Jane Carlyle, assuredly, but by Thomas too,
By Walt's boastfulness and by Emily's inklings;
In the lucidities of all well-drawn contracts,
In the songs of bedlamites who wear
Saucepans and lampshades for hats,
In nuggets of new speech panned
From the rushing riverbeds of sex.
And in the bawdry of midwives and hangmen,
In tired-and-true clichés that keep
The old intolerable truths at bay.

Would it be well, then, to legislate
Mankind out of existence? Shall God be unsexed
And doubted even by children? All that is:
Concave or convex levelled and made plane?

Let who wishes speak for himself
By rules of his own devising!
The language will have its way over all,
At last. Nor man nor woman
Nor mortal tombstone can resist for ever
Its terrible, inexorable laws.

The lives of the also-rans

By Robert Bernard Martin

ANTHONY THWAITE:
Victorian Voices
42pp. Oxford University Press. £3.95.
0 19 211037 0

The voices speaking the dramatic monologues in Anthony Thwaite's fascinating new volume of poetry are those of "one very eminent Victorians", of whom twelve are historical figures of mild intellectual, artistic, or political attainment, two are composite or imaginary characters. Curiously, the blurb writer comments that "the enterprise is a strange one, and is bound to recall Browning's 'Men and Women'. But there are no direct comparisons to be made." An odd disclaimer, both because Browning's spirit is so imminent in the poems and because the denial of comparability seems to reflect a niggling worry that there is something inherently unoriginal about literature inspired by earlier works or writers.

Anthony Thwaite described *New Confessions* (1974) as "an inner commentary on Augustine . . . written in the margin, as it were, of Augustine's writings, but . . . also a personal book of meditation and transmutation." *Victorian Voices* is his inner commentary on a group of near-misses, and he naturally evokes the nineteenth-century circles in which his characters almost flourished by a process of transmutation like that of Browning, who threw Renaissance costumes over the concerns of the Victorians.

In "The Studio" Alma-Tadema, that endearingly second-rate painter of "pale beauties of a former day", nervously asserts the chaste intention of

> . . . the upraised breasts,
> The yearning thighs, the lips that, swollen, speak.

Impulses we deny except to Art . . . He claims in toilet desperation that his canvases in the blackened fanes of Manchester are a corrective to the mercantile spirit to which he owes his financial success! In his musings on what might have been had he been born under a bluer sky, he makes us recall a similar stabbing awareness of mediocrity in Andrea del Sarto, as well as the differing point of view of Fra Lippo Lippi, and—even more remotely—Vesari's description of Andrea, from which Browning took his own information about the painter. The effect is to broaden our perspectives on popular mimetic art and the painful problem of the artist's reward.

Edward Bingham, Evangelical maker of porcelain and earthenware, concludes "The Potter's Field" with a Browningesque soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister" and Browning's other masterpieces about less than devout clerics in enclosed societies. To be sure, the blurb writer is technically correct, since not all Thwaite's models are in *Men and Women*, but the smack of Browning is strong, and it is a source of energy in these poems.

In one major way, however, these differ from most of Browning's monologues. The depth of characterization frequently comes from Thwaite's warm vein of compassion for also-rans, and most of the best poems are put in the mouths of gentle failures not rogues or deliberately mischievous persons, so that we sympathize with them rather than see through them, as we so often do in Browning.

One of the most successful monologues is spoken by John Churton Collins, the assiduous hack who finally attained the first Chair of English at Birmingham University. In his painful climb to security Collins constantly alienated friends and muddied their reputations, through philistine misunderstanding rather than any deliberate malice. Tennyson was reported to have called him a louse upon the locks of literature, and in the monologue Collins is so pathetically proud of his acquaintance with the great that he can scarcely decide between hurt and admiration for "that fine phrase/They say the Laureate uttered to my friend/(My one-time friend)".

Besides his strictly poetic intelligence, Anthony Thwaite brings a wide reading to these works. Part of the pleasure of the poems is in recognizing how he manipulates his sources: Browning, but also Meredith, whose eccentric "almost-sonnets" in *Modern Love* provide the model for "A Message from Hor", Mary Ellen Meredith's own account of the breakup of their marriage, told in the same stanza and frequently to the very words her husband used for a totally different effort. There are near-quotations from a range of works besides those of the poets, including *Father and Son* in Philip Henry Gosse's monologue and a number of more obscure biographies of Thwaite's other subjects. Frequently he uses a *trouvaille* from apparently pedestrian details, in order to light up a character. For example, in his son's biography of Collins we find the description of the last days of Collins's undergraduate life: "As he was wandering about Oxford one day, he had a sudden desire to go into St Giles' Church. . . . He went up to the Bible lying on the lectern, opened it, and at once put his finger, without looking, at a place on the newly-opened page. It happened to be Acts 14:5—'Arise and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.' He pondered over this, and interpreted it in his own way. Shortly afterwards, with nothing in view, disinherited, and practically penniless, he came to London."

In Thwaite's unostentatious blank verse this becomes an ironic echo of Augustine and Eliot:

> But on that day I strayed into St Giles,
> Facing the lectern, opening up the book,
> Placing my finger with unopened eyes—
> Those words (Acts Nine, Verse Six): 'Arise and go
> Into the city, and it shall be told thee
> What thou must do.' Nothing in view, alone,
> Without inheritance, and penniless,
> I came to London.

In its easy maturity, its generous understanding of character, and its deliberate neglect of flashy effects or attempts to startle, *Victorian Voices* seems to me the best of Anthony Thwaites fine volumes of poetry. It is a book that invites rereading and rewards it thoroughly.

Holding on to decencies

By George Szirtes

ALAN BROWNJOHN:
A Night in the Gazebo
64pp. Secker & Warburg. £3.
436 07114 2

Edward Lucie-Smith's foreword to *A Group Anthology* (1963) ends with the sentence: "The poets represented here all share a willingness to see life as a moving, though sometimes uncomfortably and painfully, linked to the business of living." The accent there, since all poetry deals with life in the broad sense, must fall on the word "business", meaning "occupation", much as in that phrase of Lord Bacon's found on the flyleaf of old Everyman volumes, "Most current for that they come home to men's business and bosoms". There is something of little Quekett's lab about this idea, something that Matthew Green might have approved of. Though the Group never issued a manifesto setting out common aims, the poems in the anthology do to some extent bear out Lucie-Smith's words in that many concern themselves with the experiences and lifestyles of teachers, lecturers, copywriters, journalists and those other urban professions that harbour poets among their members. It was as members of their professions, as citizens, that the poets wished to speak. This sense of "responsibility" doubled from Hobsbaum, and through him from Leavis, though reacting against romantic excesses, also stood a little away from the more Augustan modes of the Movement. It was more confessional in technique than the employed dramatic monologue in which the plain spoken and realistic detail could find their suitably ironic emotional ground.

Apart from Hobsbaum perhaps the most characteristic group voices belonged to Peter Porter, Martin Bell and Alan Brownjohn. Bell was the oldest and the one with the greatest range of material, of which I stood for serious reassessment since his death in 1978; Porter was the most epigrammatic, the most edgy; Brownjohn was more downbeat than either of them but, if anything closer to the texture of life as experienced by the average man. "Here's to all the truth and not feel well", wrote Martin Bell in a poem to a dead friend. This motto might also apply to the found written on Brownjohn's heart: it is he who most unalloyed most faithful to the Group

collection, *A Night in the Gazebo*, would not look out of place in the original anthology: "Scare", for example, or "The Information", or "Especially" with its strong echo of vintage Porter as parodied by Bell. In the 1960s the sense of threat registered by Brownjohn and others could be externalized: it was the Bomb. The disquiet is now more personal, a malfunction in the machine itself, age, deep blankness. At the start of his career Brownjohn might have articulated his fears in more formal patterns: the poem, for example, Time, the regular tick of the lemble. Now, though he toys with a few syllabics, he prefers to allow the images to lie at full-stretched ease. They do not sprawl, however, but remain under control; and there is room for curious irony. Brownjohn both absorbs jargon and subverts it; the disclaimers disclaim themselves, as in "Syllabics" where "An extended middle-class family runs itself. . . . The elders pushing their young to be entrepreneurs/And learn a tremendous work ethic". The steamroller of classification, the overview, is met by the feable but heroic private sense of mortality: "on erratic cass/Of forgivable weather in a summer that gave/Not many days to build castles in the air."

Under such circumstances nostalgie becomes a virtue, almost a duty. The intricacies of the immediate past are constantly kept before us. "Art Deco Railway Advertisement" is a genuine enticement to "Spend a Day in Hova"; "Mademoiselle Cleudette", a juvenile romantic type, stars transformed from Film Fair of 1939; in "Middleton St George" "The buzz of a mechanical game" recells and strangely contrests with both the noise of wer-time ecronlouse and the image of a late-1960s student at a doomed College of Education. Most pleinly, "In Praise of Nostalgia" presents the pest as a cortective to a bleek futura.

It is not that the past is exciting for Brownjohn, but that time and progress are conspiring to dehumanize us. We are egeing, and egeing ridiculously: our manners are . . . Risible old Ruritanian courtesies . . . Screaping around in the ends of emptied eggs". Then there is sex, soon in this collection es a bed cat that a man and a woman are trying to coax through the cat-flap; "And both of them getting horribly impotient". At least sax is harmless, however, and has some claims to fotimocy; though to put "A plaque on the esplanade to commemorate a successful coupling" as Brownjohn suggests in "Breach", is perhaps to see its rarity value too high. Two of the finest poems in the book seem to hint at other possibilities. In "The Doll's House" nostalgia transcends itself and finds a timeless perfection in the window of a furniture shop. "A View of Sussex" conjures such a desperate appetite for renewal that desire becomes the attainment: making love is "ravening at new bread".

Of the two long poems in the book, the "Variation on the Gawein Poet" is much the lighter: an extended allegorical anecdote, deliberately illustrating God's law as applied to sex and churchdip. In the title poem, the manager of a none-too-successful hotel, having grown indifferent to his wife, attempts frequent rejuvenation by seducing his chambermaids: we see him from the gazebo, below us, alone in his office at night, or in an upper bedroom with a girl; we see the girl's boyfriend working on the pier; we see the girl dreaming, gossiping; finally we see the manager being cremated, trailing his brides like some mild, seedy Dracula until the last. What Brownjohn describes is indeed seedy, mechanical and pointless ("And then boy' as clerk fumbled because it has taken/Eleven pale ales to her four beards-and-cokes /To bring her to the point of Revelation") but is held together by the surprising yet genuine sympathy between the characters.

The ugly, these poems tell us, is sick. The enormies of humanity have all but won, and it is a matter of preserving a few private and decent corners where some *sort* of life may yet be lived. Sympathy is the hope that Brownjohn holds out to us. It isn't much and he doesn't pretend it is, but it is not dull.

The heart's mirages

By Anne Stevenson

MARGE PIERCY:
The Moon is Always Female
133pp. New York: Knopf. $4.95.
0 394 73859 4

Marge Piercy is known in England mainly as a novelist. That the author of *Vida* and *Women on the Edge of Time* is also a powerful, distinctively American poet may come as a surprise, even to her admirers. As might be expected, *The Moon is Always Female* reflects the uncompromising bias of the committed feminist, of which some of us by now are weary. But Marge Piercy's poems are so energetic and so intelligent that weariness is out of the question. This is, in fact, her sixth book of poems, and it is an excellent one. A tough, often humorous, sometimes angry voice of herself emerges from the poems, yet they are free of sanimlitement. They lack that harsh edge of hysterical accusation—as if with a few nasty swords one could insiently abolish half the human race which spoils so many poems by another female poet. Here finally is a feminist artist for whom one need rarely blush.

The Moon is Always Female is greatly longer than most poetry volumes, and absorbing throughout. In effect, Ms Piercy is still a novelist in her poems: she has perfected an easy-flowing unrhymed line in which she says what she means with few frills. If you object to poems that tell you things, then you will not like this book. As for myself, I cannot resist delighting in such lines as "All things have their uses/except morality/in the woods" ("Indian pipe") or "I find it easy to admire in trees/what depresses me in people" ("The doughty oaks"). One of the finest among the casual poems which begin the book, "For the young who want to," contains advice about writing:

> Talent is what they say
> you have after the novel
> is published and favorably
> reviewed. Beforehand what
> you have is a tedious
> delusion, a hobby like knitting.

Like so many of Marge Piercy's poems, this one ends with a moral:

> The real writer is one
> who really writes. Talent
> is an invention like salvation
> after the fact of fire.

Work is its own cure. You have to like it better than being loved.

Apart from some endearing poems about her cats, Piercy's work scarcely qualifies as tender. Her love poems are fierce, even vengeful (possibly she means to sound vulgar; vulgarity detests gentility). Energy and exuberance render her extremely likable, however, even when she is howling or preaching: "The life is a war we are not yet winning for our daughters' children/Don't be your enemies' work for them./Finish your own."

It is possible, of course, to find all this feminist rabble-rousing annoying. However good the advice, poetry may not be the best vehicle for it. Indeed, if Marge Piercy were only a rabble-rouser she would not be a poet. The fact is, she can be as subtle as anyone writing today. Although it is easy to harbour a prejudice against "monthly" moon poetry—as it is against women's anti-men poetry, it is important to read the poetry of both kinds before pronouncing on it. Marge Piercy's moon poetry—the cycle of poems based on the Celtic Lunar Calendar, which gives her book its title—happens to be marvellous: there are thirteen poems which relate to the thirteen—twenty-eight day months of the lunar year, plus a poem at the beginning and one at the end, to round off the cycle. All these poems are interesting, some are masterpieces. One called "At the well" borrows an aged witch from Celtic mythology, and gives her a fight with an angel. The witch represents magic, if you like, or superstition; certainly fear of sexual feeling and a longing for safety. The angel represents the trans-sexual spirit of existence itself: youth and age, pain and happiness, good and evil. In the course of the fight the witch thrusts the angel from her: "Get from me/wielder of the heart's mirages" she cries "I will follow you to no more graves." So the angel departs. The witch is left blind. Fortunately the moral is not drawn. The poem trembles with ambiguity which is its power: "At the well" alone would convince me that Marge Piercy is one of America's major writers.

I say "America's" because in England feminism seems to have taken an inward turn (as in the poetry of Frances Horovitz, Penelope Shuttle and Jeni Couzyn). But the strength of Piercy's work is its outwardness, its frankness. Even if you do not agree with her, you have to meet Marge Piercy half way.

The water spirits and the fire brigade

By J. B. Donne

Art from Africa
Commonwealth Institute, Kensington High St., W8.

Contemporary African art is as yet little known in Europe and America. A few artists, mostly from Nigeria, have found promoters over here, but the new art is young, mostly post-Independence. With the break-up of the old traditions and social structures, there was little demand any more for religious art for the shrines or court art for the chiefs. Though now freed from the limitations of form, material and subject-matter that these had imposed on him, the artist had lost his patrons and had to seek new ones. He therefore turned to the local Europeans, who were bored with airport art and the vapid imitations of carved masks and figures. But since Europeans were accustomed to hanging pictures on their walls, he took to showing scenes of local life on rectangular boards, using the brightest paints he could find.

It is this brilliance of colour that immediately strikes one as one enters the exhibition hall of the Commonwealth Institute, where over 200 examples of this new art are on display. If it is dazzling to the eye, it is just as exciting to the mind. Nearly all the paintings and sculptures are by known artists and come from all over Africa, except the far north. The range of subjects is enormous. There are scenes of everyday life, moral tales, spirits from traditional belief, straight portraits, figure studies, animal studies and many records of recent historical events. Of particular interest are the references to the Biafran war in Nigeria and the battle scenes from the war in the Congo.

There is also great individuality in the artists themselves, and (with the exception of the anonymous paintings from Ethiopia which do continue a longstanding tradition) it would be difficult to recognize any national styles. Ancient Soil of Kenya is outstanding for his vivid descriptive scenes ("Nairobi Fire Brigade", "Green Village Scene"), full of vitality and movement, and an almost Impressionist palette. In contrast, Pili-Pili of Zaire paints languid birds and antelopes among exotic plants in restrained tones where green and white predominate. But Samba, also from Zaire, goes in for water spirits derived from the European mermaid, with his name and address added, as on a signboard.

President Mobutu of Zaire visits the town of Bondundu with his bodyguard (symbolized by the leopards). The painting, by Art P. Moke, is in the exhibition reviewed here.

In the case of sculpture the situation is quite different. If individual hands may be recognized in modern Makonde woodcarving from Tanzania, nevertheless the work is always obviously from the Makonde people. And the sculptors of Zimbabwe have a unity of concept which seems to make them into a school. Clearly, some of the artistic energy unleashed by Independence is going into the new art form of painting on a flat rectangular surface. Everyone interested in the New Africa should get acquainted with this new African art.

Space probes

By Frances Spalding

Giacometti
Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester

It is difficult for spectators to hold their own in this exhibition. Despite the anonymity of Giacometti's figures, which he reduced to an isolated sliver, they command the space around them. The "Walking Man" rises like a fin above the heads of the spectators. Wriggling silhouettes set up vibrations at the edges of form. Between bulky overcoats appear needles of bronze, the fragility of which forms the drifting audience, like an much aimless baggage.

This retrospective at the Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester until February 21 (also to be shown in Dublin and London) is the third the Arts Council has organized, reflecting the keen responsiveness with which his work has been received in this country. The relatively recent *Dada and Surrealism Reviewed* exhibition may explain why in this show Giacometti's surrealist work is given only a token representation. Instead the selection emphasizes the lines linking with Surrealism in 1935 marks not so much a new start as a retrieval of earlier concerns centring on the human figure.

An insight into the method is given for by the 1926 head of his mother. This restrained, tender piece, which bears up the sun beneath pectoral already Giacometti has discovered that by exaggerating one proportion here, the lateral measurement, he can achieve a remarkable heightened sense of form and making noble the ordinary. Subsequently, the artist's work is dominated by the search for a method of transcending the limitations of perspective, which he felt, reduced the human figure to a mere speck in the vast expanse of space. The exhibition includes 42 oil paintings and 60 sculptures.

The good old avant-garde

By David Bindman

A New Spirit in Painting
Royal Academy

The idea behind this enormous exhibition is not a new one and it has in different forms guided a number of recent shows in London. The underlying thesis is that the avant-garde is dead and that the initiative has passed to the upholders of more traditional values, who should now be seen as the true radicals. With the overthrow of the old idols a new church must be erected, and it is the aim of the organizers of *A New Spirit in Painting* to create a new company of saints and present to us candidates for the priesthood.

Norman Rosenthal, Christos Joachimedes and Nicholas Serota have displayed a refreshing boldness, and in choosing thirty-eight painters of different age groups have drawn from a number of European countries with a sprinkling from the United States. It would be kinder to ignore the claims of the preface by Rosenthal for the coherence of the selection ("This exhibition has in our eyes a programme. It is meant both as a manifesto and as a reflection on the state of painting now") for it is not apparent from the hanging of the exhibition or the choice of artists, nor does the unusually windy introduction by Joachimedes give us much idea of the nature of the "new spirit": "one which has swept aside unnecessary convention to establish a new relationship between image and reality through a painting of intensive poetic force and piercing imagination". In fact the exhibition is a not especially provocative or distinguished gathering of the good, the bad and the ugly, with a distinct leaning towards the figurative but still with room for some very minimal Minimalists.

There are many fashionable and gilt-edged names, and while there are a number of artists little known in this country, the helpful biographical notes in the catalogue tell us there is nobody who has not received full recognition either by famous dealers, art school professorships, serious critical articles or even major monographs. Indeed it is one of the contributions of the show that it contains recent work by some of the best-known painters like Andy Warhol and Francis Bacon.

Unfortunately, most of the best-known painters are doing much the same as before, and there is little evidence in the exhibition that the older generation are making dramatic strides. One of the major coups was undoubtedly to gather together a group of recent paintings by Balthus, who is rarely seen in this country. They are unfailingly impressive, strongly painted and influential upon younger artists, but they are hardly an advance on his earlier work. The de Koonings are as vigorous in handling as ever, but still not in the league of his marvellous paintings of the 1950s. Of work by the other four older artists chosen for special treatment, the recent paintings by Francis Bacon and Philip Guston may not be a falling-off from earlier heights, but those by Motherwell seem overblown and empty compared to what he was doing in the 1930s. Jean Hélion is a different case because his claims to be taken seriously as a painter were never very strong and the group of recent paintings on show are desperately arch and chic in the worst manner of post-war Paris. The paintings by Hockney also seem to have taken a lurch towards prettiness, and one regrets the loss of the astringency of his earlier work.

It may sound chauvinistic, but the paintings which come across most strongly in the exhibition are English ones of the middle generation. Their unassertiveness and small scale contain a telling criticism of the large and empty canvases around them. The Hodgkins look excellent in this context because one can see how carefully the handling is matched to the scale, so that they look dense and concentrated. Auerbach and Freud have never seemed more intense and poignant than when sharing a room with Hélion's fripperies. Unlikely conjunctions are also made in the largest gallery, which Balthus and de Kooning share with the German painter Georg Baselitz. His paintings show figurative images upside down, which neither affects their unexceptional academic character nor, despite his claim to "set image free", has much impact as a gesture.

Perhaps Baselitz's appeal to the organizers lay in his potential as a Prussian Son who had returned to monumental figure painting after a career on the wilder fringes of the avant-garde. I doubt whether either he or his compatriots in the exhibition will gain much of a following outside Germany, not because their paintings are bad but because their art does not really come across without the frantic background of polemic and sensational gesture that can be glimpsed in the biographical notes in the catalogue. It would be nice to see more German painting in London, but this sample does not help very much.

The last room of the exhibition contains paintings by R. B. Kitaj, which is a great treat, although it should be mentioned not in fairness to this "old" establishment that three out of five on display belong to major museums including the Tate. Still, Kitaj is one of those painters who excites curiosity about what he is doing from picture to picture, and to see two new one goes some way to raising our spirits on leaving the exhibition.

Only four can play

By Victoria Glendinning

Passion Play
Aldwych Theatre

Health warning: if your middle-aged, middle-class marriage is in crisis, think twice before accompanying your spouse to Peter Nichols's *Passion Play*. On the other hand, the experience may be therapeutic: the couple next to me spent most of the evening sitting bolt upright, their wooden faces cracking from time to time as they broke into harsh barks of laughter, but I was glad to see that towards the end they were holding hands tightly.

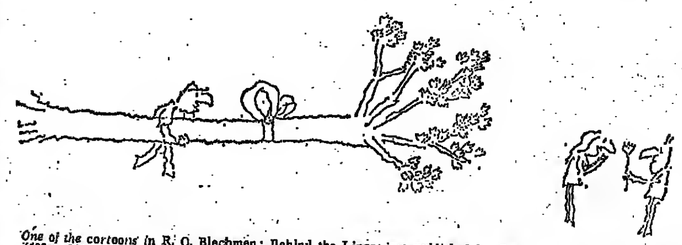
Eleanor (Billie Whitelaw) and James (Benjamin Whitrow) have brought up their children and now, in their middle years, are thrown back on one another. He is a successful picture restorer and dealer with a studio at the bottom of the garden; she sings in choirs—snatches of Verdi's *Requiem*, the "Ode to Joy", and the *St Matthew Passion* are useful fortissimo to spike the climactic moments. The two are content, they still make love, still like each other best. Pretty, sexy Kate (Louise Jameson) is nothing but a guest who overstays her welcome, until wife casually reports to yawning husband that Kate finds him very attractive. Vanity undoes him: Kate is predatory and available.

So it all begins: the excitement, the small lies, the larger lies, the secret telephone calls, the assignations, bed. Then the kind friend who cannot keep her mouth shut, the intercepted letter, the discovery, the rows, the reconciliations, the resolutions, the relapses, the revelations, the bitterness, the suicide attempt, the impasse of mutual resentment and, more heartbreakingly, mutual affection. The lovely Kate does not want James for long—she moves on. But he, infatuated, is hooked. "I don't want an old friend, I want a lover", he moans. Married life has become "a cosy prison".

But this is a comedy, isn't it? Yes it is. Peter Nichols has always got his laughs by shock tactics, by breaking taboos and allowing his characters to say the unsayable truth. But the point about marital crisis for most people is that so much is unsaid—it is often a matter of tight silences or artificial normality, with every routine enquiry—"What time will you be back tonight?" or "Do you have a choir practice on Saturday afternoon?"—carrying a subtext of gunpowder, treason and plot. Peter Nichols gets round this problem by providing Eleanor and James with alter egos, who act out repressed gestures and voice the running commentary in each spouse's head, their uncensored thoughts and subconscious manoeuvres. It makes one realize how much automatic lying goes on in even the most banal exchanges, and works very well under Mike Ockrent's confident direction, once you get used to the idea of a duet for four players. It is operatic and satisfactorily funny—and, in the last scene which it would be a pity to spoil by describing, unsentimentally moving.

Benjamin Whitrow acts with faultless understatement as the husband; in presence and style, he is the discriminating woman's Peter Barkworth. (As the wife remarks, "It's hard enough to find one person you fancy, let alone two.") Billie Whitelaw as Eleanor is stalwart and warm and believable. It is slightly disturbing that Mr Whitrow's alter ego, played by Anton Rodgers, is so much more corporeal—bigger and louder and darker—than he is himself; whereas Miss Whitelaw's emotional understudy—the fine-drawn Eileen Atkins, giving a nicely witty performance—is so much less corporeal than she is. Maybe this is meant to tell you something about their inner selves, maybe not. The only things wrong with *Passion Play* are a sag in the second act and the passionless cut-price set—a built-purpose split-level affair that has James and Eleanor in a chrome-and-vinyl sitting room that looks like the entrance hall of a third-rate advertising agency. They wouldn't have liked it at all.

Passion Play is published by Eyre Methuen (106pp. Hardback £4.50. 0 413 47910 2. Paperback £2.50. 0413 47800 3.)



One of the cartoons in R. O. Blechman: Behind the Lines, just published by Hudson Hills Press, New York (192pp. £15. 0 933920 07 5). The book is a selection from all Blechman's work, and includes, in full (though reduced in scale), his earlier book, The Juggler of Our Lady.

The Dulwich College Picture Gallery restored

By Christopher Brown

London's oldest public art gallery reopened on January 14 after redecoration and the rehanging of the collection. Giles Waterfield, the new director of the Dulwich College Picture Gallery, has not only rearranged the paintings and recreated the wall colour—a deep raspberry red—chosen by the architect Sir John Soane; he has also opened up the central mausoleum so that visitors with a taste for tombs can inspect the sarcophagi of Sir Francis Bourgeois and his friend Noel Desenfans.

It was in 1811 that Bourgeois, a wealthy collector and indifferent painter, transformed the Gallery's modest collection of founders' portraits and Frankenstein landscapes by his bequest of 371 paintings of the highest quality. The principal strength—as contemporary taste dictated—was in works of the seventeenth century: Rubens and Van Dyck, Rembrandt and Cuyp, Poussin and Claude, Guido Reni and Murillo. Bourgeois had inherited the greater part of the collection only four years previously from the French art dealer Desenfans, who had been commissioned in 1790 to buy paintings for King Stanislaus of Poland. They were to form the nucleus of a National Gallery in Warsaw. It was an exciting moment to be buying, as the Revolution prevented the dispersal of many important private collections in France. However, when Stanislaus was forced to abdicate in 1795, Desenfans found himself with a group of unwanted masterpieces. He proposed to the British Government that they form the basis of a National Gallery in London, but his offer was declined and it was not until 1824 that that institution finally saw the light of day.

Dulwich gratefully accepted this remarkable bequest and Soane was commissioned to design a building in which to house it. The exterior brick building, with excellent top lighting, was ready in 1814. Although there have been numbers of subsequent bequests the collection remains a monument to the taste of the last years of the eighteenth century. More recently the Gallery has had financial problems, which became public with the sale of the Domenichino "Adoration" in 1971. Apparently the sum raised by the sale was not enough, for some years later an application was made to the Charity Commissioners for permission to dispose of a large number of lesser paintings. Fortunately that move was resisted and in the past few years the Trustees, under the energetic chairmanship of Basil Greenhill, have put the Gallery's finances on a firmer footing. The redecoration, paid for by the Gallery's Friends and the recent publication of a substantial catalogue, are evidence of this new determination.

The Director has retained the traditional double hanging in the main gallery, but has arranged the pictures. The two Van Dyck Madonnas and his "Samson and Delilah" are among the paintings newly elevated, but the lighting is so good throughout the day that the higher row of pictures can be seen without difficulty. In the smaller rooms the grouping of paintings has been made more consistent: the Rubens sketches are together, as are the Dutch landscapes (it is reassuring to learn that the Hobbema landscape, which the latter hung is temporary).

On a summer day in 1871 the painter James Smetham went to Dulwich, then a village on the outskirts of London,

to have a look at the Gallery. It is the most delightful gallery in arrangement and surroundings that I know, or know of. You don't go out of a hot street, where on the hot pavement you meet hot and discoloured people coming out in lavender and stained-coloured gloves, irritated with British art, like a bull chat has seen a red rag (the Ingrates!). You walk along a breezy quiet road—This way to the Picture Gallery"—under green trees, beside green fields, and you give a little gravelly turn, and—The Picture Gallery is now open. How kind! How civil! How aliens! You write your name in a visitors' book and see that yesterday John Ruskin was here. . . . All is sober and unrrowded, and well lighted and profoundly still . . .

Miraculous though it may seem, little has changed in the intervening century. Dulwich, though no longer on the edge of London, retains the charm of a Georgian country village, and a visit to the Gallery is still to be recommended as an antidote to the hot and discontented critics of modern art, who are always with us.

The catalogue of the Dulwich Picture Gallery, by Peter Murray, will be reviewed in a forthcoming issue of the *TLS*. It is obtainable in two forms, each with the same illustrations (eight colour, 310 black and white). The full version has about 130 pages of text about the collection and the individual paintings, is in hardback and costs £35 (0 85667 0715). The "handlist" has only 30 pages of text—mostly factual notes on the paintings—is in paperback and costs only £3.75 (0 85667 0847). Both are obtainable from the Gallery, College Road, London SE21 7AD, post and package £1.

Knockabout farce

By Peter Kemp

The Muscle Market
BBC TV

At the start of Alan Bleasdale's play, John Lennon is heard raucously rhapsodizing over "Money"; as it ends, Paul McCartney wistfully regrets the passing of "Yesterday". Like the singers, the play—set on Merseyside—is Liverpudlian. Like the songs, it moves from cheerily abrasive greed to gloom about the ending of the good times.

The central character is Danny, a builder with tough-house friends. Avidly crooked, he has got along unscathed in the easy-going past. Now, as the economic climate worsens, so too do business and his knuckle-duster mates' behaviour. Pressurized by the Inland Revenue on one side, and leaned on by heavies on the other, Danny gradually goes under. Divided into four acts, each with an ambivalent title—"Market Forces", "Under the Hammer", "Slumps and Booms", "Final Returns"—the play attempts an analogy between monetarism and the brutalities it provokes.

The message is badly blurred by the play's inability to maintain a tone. Much of it is slapstick comedy. Danny blunders hopelessly at golf, dodges the underpant-plucking importunities of a never-satisfied wife, cannot lean against a shed without it collapsing. He is the kind of fall-guy who, when toppled from a thug's car, lands at the taxi-man's feet. And along with this goes a chirpy line in gritty reporting as he dusts himself down. Creaky vaudeville routines and the introduction of a dog called Abbott and Costello add to the general air of comic unreality.

Spliced into this farce, though, is a lot of hideously realistic violence. Danny's associates among the Mersey mafiosi—especially one who is obsessed with Raft and Cagney, wears white silk ties, and sports a cut-throat in his inoperable suit—often seem harmless caricatures. And reinforcing this impression is some lumbering pastiche of gangster movies. Then, with a sickening lurch of tone, the play plummets into a welter of broken noses, cracked ribs and agonized screaming.

Similarly, characterization ricochets bewilderingly around. Peter Postlethwaite as Danny manages to bring conviction to his abrupt swings from comedy to thuggery and back; but others do not fare nearly so well. Soulless, the play is spectacularly various; tricksily watchable bad-mate, deadpan wise-cracker, simpering little woman and an eat-your-heart-out driver. It would take more than the acrobatics and bandy-ball that increasingly occupy the characters to hold all these together.

Ex machina man

By T. J. Binyon

The Stunt Man
Classic Cinemas, Heymarket, Oxford Street and Chelsea

It is a rare art form nowadays that does not feel impelled to comment on its own existence, and Richard Rush's *The Stunt Man* follows the trend, being yet another film about the film. The plot is simple: eccentric, megalomaniac director Eli Cross (Peter O'Toole), making a First World War anti-war film in and anti-war films, loses a stunt man in an accident and blackmails a passing Vietnam veteran on the run from the cops (Steve Railsback) into taking the job and undertaking a series of ever more death-defying feats.

But the point of the film does not lie here, in the depiction of a stunt man's world—for that, see Burt Reynolds in *Hooper*, a film to which glancing reference seems to be made when the nameless fugitive becomes stunt man Burt. The real stunt man of the title is Eli himself, descending from the clouds on a location crane to comfort his new protégé with omnipotence—"If God could do the tricks we do, he'd be a happy man"—and played by Peter O'Toole with all the bravura in Hollywood and enough ham to feed the five thousand, should they tire of bread and fish. And the stunt in itself, as the film endlessly reiterates, stands for the relationship between illusion and reality that is the film.

Illusion is more real than reality: the point is made early on when the battle-hardened veteran watching, with a crowd of other onlookers, the filming of a bombing raid, is so appalled when a stunt seemingly goes wrong and the smoke clears to reveal mutilated bodies and spouting blood, that he involuntarily, as if back in Vietnam, calls for the medics. But it is, of course, Kensington gore, and the limbs are as plastic as the *Pickelhaubon*. "They could make a quarter horse out of a jackass", muses the chief stunt man, caressing the bonnet of a fake Duesenberg, and Eli hammers the idea home: "The first King Kong was three foot six inches high, and only came up to Fay Wray's belly button."

Controversise, reality is used to strengthen illusion: Nina (Barbara Hershey), the heroine of both films, is made to display genuine shame when awarded a German decoration on camera, because she has simultaneously learnt that her parents and little sister—through accident done on purpose—have seen John, semi-pornographic footage of her cavorting nude on a bed. Each stunt Burt does turns out to have an extra backflip or two for which he has not bargained: unexpected dangers follow the expected ones, causing real rather than simulated panic. But then, with a final twist, the dangers prove illusory, not real: other stunt men are there to catch him if he falls, frogmen will, if necessary, drag him out of a sinking car.

In the end, however, it turns out to be—perhaps inevitably—an illusion that the film is going to make a real statement about the problem: ignoring philosophy, and leaving some tantalizing loose ends hanging out of the plot, it settles for a good old-fashioned happy ending of boy gets girl. Yet, at the same time, it can't resist a final self-conscious ironic statement: as Nina, holding her long skirts high, runs through a puddle towards a resurrected Burt, an overcranked camera turns the scene into the slow motion of a margarine advertisement on television.

In fact, it is too rich a film to be satisfied with grey theory for long; while giving the impression it doesn't quite know where it is going, it works up a fine pace on the way. The central performances are somewhat disappointing: Peter O'Toole makes Eli's windy apophthegms almost excessively flatulent, and Steve Railsback plays as a semi-mute, whose strangulated utterance is presumably intended to signify honesty, simplicity and innocence. But the minor parts are, without exception, superlatively done, and the film as a whole crackles with energy, imagination and originality.

Malaysian straits

By Valentine Cunningham

Writers and Places: "A Kind of Failure".
BBC TV

"Never go back, said the poet", said Anthony Burgess going back to Malaysia, ex-Malaya as he knew it, to inaugurate the new *Writers and Places* series on BBC 2. Malaya had "told" Burgess "to become a writer". He had listened, finding his first public with the novel *Time for a Tiger* (1956), named after Tiger beer, a drink of the country, and now he had returned to pay off the "old debt" to be filmed as he drank more noggins of Tiger and poured cosmopolitan scorn on everything Malaysian. "As for today, you can keep it."

Sylsks proved itself once again a wonderful energiser of a text. What kept this filmic essay so riveting were the lecting shots of a startlingly green countryside, as sinuously artful as a snake's back, over full of mild-looking residents muttering their own business, lounging contentedly off trees, up to their knees in rice-puddles, gambling hard if they were Chinese, knocking someone's balls for six if they were English or Indian, while among them there prowled the persuasive Burgess, uttering the well-aimed jeremiads of some major prophet.

"A kind of failure", said Burgess of his, and failure was the note he kept sounding. The Empire was no good, it turned out, because Britain spread little hesterdized Englishnesses around, like the "Eton of the East" where Burgess taught and where House Spirit nowadays sits down to nosh rice with its fingers and do unexplained things with the oddly large kettles we saw passing busily up and down the vestibules. No wonder the Empire—"Just a few white men sitting on verandahs"—proved a pushover to just a few more Japanese arriving on bicycles.

This was satiric historiography with a vengeance. The feckless Britons in the rubber industry—kindly imported by the British—only to give the world rubbers: "Dunlop tyres, school erasers, contraceptives". Not to be outdone, the wily Chinese, wear into Malaya light, and now roll around in tin, or at least in Hoodn blkes, stereos and other consumer toys. The Malayans Burgess taught twenty-six years ago are, he gnashed, at home in London, but in its "strip-clubs rather than the British Museum. They certainly do not, gritted the author with the interests of writers whose names begin with B at heart, read Bishop Berkeley or Brigid Brophy. Malaya's lauting of the Malayan trilogy at Anthony Burgess understandably exercised him.

Burgess's way with words, muscular with adjectives, burly with adverbs, was expectably good. Naturally, the lover of etymology made much of language issues. To hear him intoning the polyglot cries of Islam thrillingly illustrated his profession of the attraction he once felt the Muslim faith. His dribmatic use of other bits of local lingo underpinned the boldness of his book: "Enough Malay-talk, I spoke illegal language. I knew them better than Conrad." And modern Malaysia finally proved it would not pass when Burgess filed to stand up a couple of whitesses under the palms to talk Malay, so speak his language of the colonies, to sandpiper in English—the country and the man. It was in the end the most condescending photograph of Burgess's career: "I think nothing of it to shake other."

Film and Empire

Forthcoming theatre film directed by Roland Joffé and produced by David Puttnam will be set in Malaya and Singapore in the 1930s and 1940s. It will be based on the life of Lady Sheila Scott-Malden, who was married to a British rubber planter in Malaya and who was interned by the Japanese during the occupation of Singapore. Principal photography will take place in Malaya and Singapore in the autumn of this year.

Among this week's contributors

PERCY ALLUM is Reader in Politics at the University of Reading.

M. S. ANDERSON's most recent book is *Historians and Eighteenth-Century Europe*, 1979.

T. O. BEIDELMAN is the editor of *The Translation of Culture: Essays to E. E. Evans-Pritchard*, 1971.

DAVID BINDMAN is the author of *Blake as an Artist*, 1978.

ROGER BOWEN's edition of the collected poems of Bernard Spencer will be published later this year.

WILLIAM BOYD's first novel, *A Good Man in Africa*, is published next week.

ARCHIE BROWN is co-editor of *Authority, Power and Policy in the USSR*, 1980.

CHRISTOPHER BOOWN is Deputy Keeper at the National Gallery.

A. S. BYATT's most recent novel is *The Virgin in the Garden*, 1978.

JAMES CLIFFORD's study of the French anthropologist Maurice Leenhardt will be published later this year.

J. S. CONWAY is the author of *The Nazi Persecution of the Churches, 1933-45*, 1968.

MARGARET CRUM is an assistant in the Department of Western Manuscripts at Bodleian Library, Oxford.

VALENTINE CUNNINGHAM's books include *Everywhere Spoken Against: Dissent in the Victorian Novel*, 1975.

TOM DISCH's new book of poems *ABCDEFG HIJKLM NPOQRST UVWXYZ* will be published by Anvil Press this year.

J. B. DONNE is the translator of Gauguin's *Noa Noa*, 1980.

A. I. DOYLE is Keeper of Rare Books and Reader in Bibliography at the University of Durham.

ROY FOSTER is the author of *Charles Stewart Parnell: the Man and his Family*, 1976.

DAVID GASCOYNE's *Journal 1936-1937* was published last year.

VICTORIA GLENDINNING's biography of Edith Sitwell will be published later this year.

OLWEN H. HUFTON is the author of *The Poor of Eighteenth-Century France, 1750-1789*, 1974.

SIMON KARLINSKY's *Anton Chekhov's Life and Thought: Selected Letters and Commentary*, was published in 1976.

PETER KEAR'S critical study *H. G. Wells and the Culminating Ape* will be published by Macmillan this year.

J. P. KENYON's recent books include *Revolution Principles*, 1977, and *Stuart England*, 1978.

HERMIONE LEE is the author of *The Novels of Virginia Woolf*, 1977.

JULIUS LEWIN's books include *Politics and Law in South Africa*, 1963.

I. M. LEWIS's books include *Ecstatic Religion: an Anthropological Study of Spirit Possession and Shamanism*, 1971.

PETER LINEBAUGH is a Fellow of St John's College, Cambridge.

GERVASE LINDOP is a lecturer in English at the University of Manchester.

JOHN LUCAS's *The Literature of Change* and his study of Dickens, *The Melancholy Man*, have just been republished.

PATRICK MCCARTHY is the author of *Céline*, 1975.

ROBERT BERNARD MARTIN's *Tennyson: the Unquiet Heart* was recently awarded the Duff Cooper Memorial Prize.

JOHN MILLER is a lecturer in History at Queen Mary College, University of London.

KENNETH O. MORGAN's *Wales 1880-1980* will be published later this year.

GEOFFREY PARKER'S most recent book is *The Dutch Revolt*, 1977.

RIGBY PARCE is the author of *The French Second Republic: A Social History*, 1972.

CAROL RUMENS's new collection of poems, *Unplayed Music*, will be published in February by Secker.

LORNA SAGE teaches literature at the University of East Anglia, Norwich.

C. H. SISSON's translation of *The Divine Comedy* was published in 1980.

FRANCES SPALDING's biography of Roger Fry was published last year.

ANNE STEVENSON's most recent collection of poems, *Enough of Green*, was published in 1977.

GEORGE SZIRTES's collection of poems, *The Slant Door* (1980), was a winner of the Geoffrey Faber Memorial Prize.

A. N. WILSON is the author of *The Laird of Abbotsford: A View of Sir Walter Scott*, 1980.

Author, Author

Readers are invited to identify the source of the three quotations which follow and to send us the answers so that they reach the office not later than Friday, February 13. A prize of £10 is offered for the first correct set of answers to be opened, or failing that, the most nearly correct—in which case inspired guesswork will also be taken into consideration.

Entries should be addressed to the Editor, The Times Literary Supplement, PO Box 7, New Printing House Square, Gray's Inn Road, London WC1X 8EZ, and marked "Author, Author" on the envelope. The solution and result will appear in our issue of February 20.

Competition No 52

1. PRINCE: Fundament! Fundament! Do I find bottom?
CAPTAIN: Aye, zany, anchor thy soles.
Cut short thy prayers; they're curtly answered.
Oh, I am froze white as my grandfather's beard!
Off! Fetch sere sticks;
We'll build such fires in the north star himself
Will find his ice a-sweat.
FRIENDS: Who orders me? Am I one that's ordered?
CAPTAIN: I (*striking him*): Sticks, goose, rummage by hill!
Waste not my chilled surmise
On thy peculiar. Art so wet I'ns pan.
Thou best forgot thyself? Ill fetch flint.

2. CAPTAIN: Ho there signor! You are in danger there.
PHILARIO: (*hastening upon*) Whats your news?
I am sent by Lucius to find out how Tarsa
Our right wing led by General Iachimo
CAPTAIN: He is outgeneralled. There's no right wing now.
Broken and routed, utterly defeated.
Our eagles taken and the few survivors
In full flight like myself. And you?
PHILARIO: My news is even worse. Lucius, I fear, is
CAPTAIN: Someone has disciplined these savage archers.
They shoot together and advance in step.
Their horsemen trot in unison to the charge
And then let loose their entire mass full speed.

3. THE AUTHOR: I've written that speech. Shell I read it? [*Reads from his handout*] Thanks.
MR SHAKESPEARE (*reads*): "Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow.
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,
To the last syllable of recorded time;
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more: it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing."
MR BURBAGE: Well, you don't expect me to say that, I suppose. It's a third too short. There's not a single rhyme in it. It's not nothing to do with the situation, and it's an insult to the stage. "Struts and frets" indeed! I can see there's nothing left for me but to throw up the part. You can got anyone you please to play Macbeth. One thing is quite certain, I won't.
Exit MR BURBAGE *in a passion.*
THE STAGE MANAGER (*to the AUTHOR*): Now you've done it.

Result of Competition No 49
Winner: John Wardle, 101 Sheriff's Highway, Gateshead 9.
Answers:
1. Dear 338171 (may I call you 338?) —Noël Coward, letter to "Aircraftman Shaw" (T. E. Lawrence).
2. Posy was not as impressed as Pauline had been. "It's all very well", she said, "for an actress to nonblicez jamais that she can continue à apprendre jusqu'à son dernier jour. But it's silly for a dancer. She'd much better n'oublier-jamais that you can't be a first-class dancer for very many years, and that all her apprendre-ing would have to be done while she was still young".
Madame Moulin laughed and patted her cheek, and said she was an enfant terrible. "Mais to me fais rire".
—Noel Streatfeild, *Ballet Shoes*.
3. The *dingo* is not much favoured as a literary form in England today: it is hauled out of the cupboard only for use at memorial services, decently to extol the dead men's virtues. The prefile and the interview, the literary forms now much in use, are designed not to praise but to cut people down to size. This was the vogue which delighted Beaverbrook; he called it "lopping off the heads of the tall poppies". The journalist prides himself on the weak spot, knows the *banderilla* and, so goads the wretched bull that he plunges to the doom of self-exposure. Professional interviewers regard this special skill with grave self-satisfaction. They are unanimous in declaring that it does the victim a positive service: he may not appear admirable, but he is at least credible.
—Noel Annan, introduction to *Personal Impressions* by Isaiah Berlin.

Information please

Dan Billany: brief biographical details about this writer who died as a prisoner of war in Italy in 1943-44. — Ken Worpole.

76 Carysfort Road, London N16.

Robert and Elizabeth Barrett Browning: whereabouts of privately owned letters for an edition of their correspondence. Particularly wish to locate the collection of 120 letters, dated 1826-1835, from R. H. Boyd, RN, offered for sale by C. H. Elsr, Bromley, Kent, c. 1927. — Philip Kelley.

PO Box 213, Arkansas City, Kansas 67005.

Cookery and household affairs: I am currently coordinating a three-volume bibliography of cookery books and books related to household and domestic affairs published in Britain 1800-1945. Would such a bibliography be of use to librarians and large museums but we now feel the need in turn to individual collectors and specialists in the related areas for help in compilation of this work: any information or advice. — T. Hunter.

88 Rosslyn Street, Liverpool L17 7DP.

Sara Jeannette Duncan (1861-1922) Canadian-born novelist and journalist who lived in England (London and Ashtead, Surrey) and in India (Calcutta and Simla); whereabouts of letters, diaries or other relevant material, for a biography. Among her friends were E. M. Forster, James Louis Garvin, Sir Edwin Lutyens and Henry Yates Thompson. — Meriel Fowler.

Canadian Studies Program, Atkinson College, York University, 4700 Keele Street, Downsview, Ontario M3J 1P3.

to the editor

Picasso

Sir,—In "The plenty of Picasso" (January 9), Tim Hilton asks four questions about the "Demoiselles" that can be answered, at least so far as the autumn of 1922 is concerned.

I met M Picasso at an evening party given by Count Etienne de Beaumont, a few days after I had seen the portrait of Miss Stein. When he asked me to say what I thought of the portrait, I explained that I didn't really know anything about painting, but that I was rather put off because the face appeared to have been over-painted after the portrait had been finished; the painting of the face did not appear to match the rest of the picture. M Picasso said that he had, in fact, repainted the face—and then added, teasingly: "Never mind, the customer is very satisfied." We then started discussing the idea of "finish" in a picture. In the course of which he said that my ideas were those of a cabinet-maker. Then he added: "If you will come to my studio tomorrow, I will show you a problem I have been wrestling with for fifteen years."

I was very shocked indeed when I saw his "Demoiselles" unrolled on the floor of his studio. He explained that none of his friends liked it and asked me hopefully for my opinion. It appeared to me to be drenched in hopeless pessimism, which seemed to an idealistic eighteen-year-old to be quite wicked. I looked round rather desperately for a diversionary topic and caught sight of a delightful blue-drawing of Picasso, a small child and a women. The drawing seemed to me to have a unity that was lacking in the "Demoiselles" and I said so. Picasso then answered, in effect, the questions which Tim Hilton has asked nearly sixty years later. He had been trying to finish the painting for fifteen years; he painted out the over-painting; the picture was not resolved and he must give it up. He rolled up the canvas and I have never seen it since.

W. ARNOLD LLOYD.
Trinity College, Cambridge CB2 1TQ.

'The Greek Language'

Sir,—There are two sorts of people: those who, when confronted with an opinion opposed to their own, jump up and down and shout; and those who listen in polite silence and then go away to form a considered judgment. L. R. Palmer's angry reaction to my review of his book *The Greek Language* (Letters, January 9) makes it obvious which type he belongs to.

I pointed out the weaknesses in Professor Palmer's theory of a Cretan element in Greek place names in an article in *Transactions of the Philological Society* for 1969; so far from answering my arguments, he has studiously ignored them. He will find his supporters fewer than he thinks.

When Linear B was deciphered, we all began by trying to fit the new information into the old theory. But long time some of us came to realize that the figure was the theory rather than the new information which prevented an exact fit, and alternative approaches. For about the past twenty years I have been of Mr Kretzschmar's view, that the Greek language was formed inside Greece; at the most recent international meeting where this subject was discussed, at Budapest in 1979, no one disputed that view.

My more recent ideas about the Doric dialects are as yet far from widely accepted; but they offer a relative to Palmer's view, with this problem, unless we are prepared to try outsuch apparently quite different ideas. I still find it surprising that an expert linguist would rely upon the support of a linguist who believes that the *Ductilon (Lotos)* gave their name to the Dorians.

Let me have more space. I might have included some of the describing of poetic and prose style, which should have had to deplore a contemptuous treatment of Denys Page, who is only mentioned in comparison with Isocrates. But in this part of the book Palmer is following, more successfully, the example of his predecessor, B. F. C. Atkinson. Incidentally, *dnunatio memorine* refers to the deletion of a person's name from the record, and therefore seems to me a correct designation of Palmer's habit of suppressing the names of people he dislikes.

JOHN CHADWICK.
Downing College, Cambridge CB2 1DQ.

The Book of Job

Sir,—In her interesting article on Job (December 26), Anita Brookner mentions that that there is a church in Venice (San Giobbe) dedicated to him. She may be interested to know that there is also a mosque in Istanbul that bears his name. This is the Eyüp mosque, which was named after a Companion of the Prophet (Ayub in Arabic), who in turn was named after Job.

It is relevant to recall that all the Prophets of Christianity and Judaism are to be found in Islam. Especially venerated are Jesus and Mary.

WILLIAM STODDART.
15 Chesham Street, London SW1X 8ND.

Light Verse

Sir,—In connection with P. N. Furbank's benevolent review of my *Penguin Book of Light Verse* (January 9), I would like to say that there is indeed a kind of verse that can be described as "light"—now that categories are so popular with the publishers of anthologies. It has something to do with entertainment, and it can hear be described negatively. A line like "Never, never, never, never, never" is not light verse, nor is any poem by Wordsworth. Solemnity is its great enemy. It may be colloquial in its language, but this in itself is no guarantee of lightness ("Danny Deever"). Auden wrongly included in his LV anthology, is not light verse, nor are most of the poems of Amis and Larkin). It is often bawdy—in fact the only tragic poetry which is bawdy is Lear's ex-obsessed raving. Ophelia's rendy dity is only tragic because of the circumstances under which it is sung. Light verse is not necessarily by, with or from a Philistine. Gilbert was a Philistine but he was also a great artist, in a limited genre. The vareification of the best of his patter songs is unequalled.

My intention was to correct the prejudice in favour of folk poetry in Auden's very fine collection (the Border Ballads were omitted, for verso) and to restore some of the vast amount of good early material neglected by Kingsley Amis, who ruled out Chaucer, Pope, Dryden, Burns, Byron—and began with Shakespeare. Above all, I tried to make the collection as complete as possible. Hence the Exeter riddles, the limericks, the entire, the love lyrics, the one ragger song.

Songs are, almost by their nature, light. "Robin and Mokyne" and "Mistress Mine" are bitter-sweet, erotic in tone. They quietly negatively, as it were, not being tragic. They do, too, have beauty—denied to light verse by Auden and Furbank.

One has to accept it, you cannot win. Anybody can take exception to any anthology. Yet surely it is better to include more rather than less (640 pages rather than 348)?

GAVIN EWART.
57 Kenilworth Court, Lower Richmond Road, London SW15 1EN.

Sir,—I was surprised to find P. N. Furbank launching, under cover of a review (January 9), such a pro-faced attack on light verse. As he swells with indignation he takes on an all-too-familiar Cambridge tone: "There are, I need not say . . . So far as one can see, there is no great need . . ." etc. Wrong-headedness then gets mixed in with righteousness: Kingsley Amis is permitted to make less, whereas Peacock is hardly to be tolerated. Peacock as neer philistine is about as credible as proposing Flann O'Brien a cover West Briton.

Auden is indeed a key figure when thinking about light verse, as Mr Furbank recognises. The suggestion that he simply needed "a religious or, for good personal reasons, hardly serious reason" for his use of it. Much more recently, in May 1968, which furnishes the material for my epilogue, we witnessed an insurrection one of whose celebrated episodes unfolded at the Odéon Theatre, where student leaders spent days on a national stage articulating their aversion to "agotistical" art. Along the way, there was Firmin Gémier, first director of the TNP, who, before and after the First World War, invoked the precedent of Revolutionary festivals as he staged mythic dramas with thousands in the cast, which were meant to apotheosize a corporate state or "organic" society.

I should not have found it necessary to summarize an argument elaborated in my book if Mr Weightman had discharged the basic duty of a reviewer, which is to tell readers what a book is about. It appears that the title *Theater and Revolution* led him to anticipate a different work from the one he encountered, and so he retee it for not equaring with the rather conventional history he had in mind. The distinction he makes between "classic" critics and "romantic" ones (myself) shows me someone taking cover under focile categories to hide his incomprehension. I gather that Weightmen feels rather lost without the security of such categories, for his review abounds in them. By the same token, he is disturbed at not being able to pin me down to an ideological *parti pris*.

One last remark. Weightmen ascribes several errors of fact to my romantic enthusiasm, among them the fact that *comédiens forains* were not "foreign actors", as I translate it, but travelling players. A bit more classic reserve might have induced him to consult an etymological dictionary and learn that *forain* originally meant "foreign" but got conflated with the word for fair—*foire*. Fairground actors were often foreign actors and, in all events, were viewed as coming from the outside.

FREDERICK BROWN.
815 West End Avenue, New York, NY 10024.

'Down in the Jungle'

Sir,—Dennis Samuel points out (Letters, January 9) that the rhyme

Down in the jungle
Living in a tent,
Better than a pre-fab—
No rent!

quoted by D. J. Enright in his review of *Counting-Out Rhymes* (December 19) as being assigned to children in "Lincolnshire, 1952" came in a BBC radio show at about that time. How might he is! This rhyme, like much else in *Counting-Out Rhymes*, has been taken from our collections, this particular snippet coming from *The Lore and Language of Schoolchildren*, page 105, where, in support of the thesis that the young are not as creative as is generally supposed, we point out that this then-popular verse "was not attributable to the emotional vigour of childhood, but to a weekly feature in a Charlie Chester show".

Here we go round the mulberry bush, the mulberry bush, the mulberry bush.

IONA and PETER OPIE.
Westerfield Stolen, West Liss, Hampshire GU33 6JQ.

Coleridge

Sir,—May I through you ask readers, collectors, and librarians to assist the editors of *The Collected Works of S. T. Coleridge* to make the edition as complete as possible by sending me word of any Coleridge manuscripts or books annotated by him that are not in the larger British and American libraries? We have had splendid cooperation from consulting all those institutions known to have Coleridge holdings, but there may well be significant fragments of manuscript or books containing his initials or his notes, in private libraries or smaller college libraries which we should not wish to overlook.

Our respons to any information would entail the minimum of inconvenience to the owners, and we should naturally repay any expenses incurred in postage, Xeroxing, or in other ways.

KATHLEEN COBURN.
Victoria College, Toronto, Canada M5S 1K7.

'Hindsight'

Sir,—Gay Clifford's review of Charlotte Wolff's recently published autobiography, *Hindsight*, was headed "The medicine of muted words" (December 5). I thought there were some notable discrepancies and inexactitudes in her own words. She wrote that the title-page suggested that "being a doctor is a rather important part of her view of herself. Yet . . ." It seems a statement of the obvious: I would expect that the most general practitioner who has spent years studying and practising his profession considers it a "rather important part", and Dr Wolff is very far from being general in her studies, researches and experience and least of all in her own self. Nor could I see that the following "Yet" related to make any point to disclose the inference of the title-page. What followed was total corroboration.

To concede that Dr Wolff's work has "always had the courage of the marginal" is a slighting dismissal of a lifelong devotion to a lost, almost an ethnic, cause which has still to be found, understood and accepted. The trumpeting of radical groups makes the acceptance more remote. I am not in a position to say whether their criticism is justified. Gay Clifford says it is—I wish she had amplified the statement.

Not to do so is to plant an unjustifiable, because unverifiable, doubt in the mind of the uninformed reader. And how many readers of her review will be informed about the opinions of bisexuals and lesbians, radical or otherwise? Whom should I regard as the expert, Gay Clifford or Dr Wolff? Dr Wolff has written this book and others on the subject and on subjects related. Gay Clifford is lecturing in English at University College and that is all I know of her. Assumably she has the edge on Dr Wolff in the final analysis. But why should I assume that?

If "political and cultural acuity" do not feature in this book it is because they have no place. Dr Wolff has not chosen to interpret the current affairs of her early years in Germany, Franco and England. It has been done ad nauseam by countless official and unofficial observers. She has simply, and adequately, recorded the cumulative effect events had on her life, her emotions, and her practical circumstances.

I don't see the incident she relates when she went to a theatre to see *Arsenic and Old Lace* as an "unintentionally" revealing tale. There is every intention in the telling and the revelation, as Dr Wolff makes clear in the last sentence of the excerpt. Nor can I find the words she used stilted or excessive. "Inhuman" might have been equally—though no better—expressed as "callous" but "perverted" and "crime" are exact and irreplaceable in the context. There is no "verbal clumsiness" in Dr Wolff's text—there is a justifiable bitter comment on British humour.

Biography is an odd thing to ask for in an autobiography. To my way of thinking, one should not ask for anything: to ask, to infer that the writer should have produced something different, is to impose one's own conception, one's own fiction, on the private, personal and—in this instance—subject's sacrificial revelations. One should not even question the method in which such revelations are made, the method is part of the revelation.

In an autobiography the "outo" is absolute. The "more benign" literature, where might have cheered Gay Clifford would have been unfaithful to the "anxious spirit" which is evident throughout the book. And if, by the lack of a generous and carefully articulated passion", she means an itemized account of leaders in lesbian making, I for one commend the good taste and sensitivity which saw fit to omit it.

The book is a difficult one to review, it is neither fish nor fowl nor common meat. Which is why, when every Tom, Dick and mnemeticus Harry is rushing into print, it really will be saddening if the review in the *TLS* is the last word on a unique and important life.

A. J. BARKER.
203 Harrow Road, Carshalton, Surrey.

Authors and authorities

By Hermione Lee

JOHN CARGILL THOMPSON :
50 British Plays 1660-1900
448pp. Heinemann. £7.50.
0 435 18881 X

PETER JONES :
50 American Poets
386pp. Heinemann. £7.50.
0 435 18491 1

MICHAEL SCHMIDT :
50 British Poets 1300-1900
430pp. Heinemann. £7.50.
0 435 18811 9

MARTIN SEYMOUR-SMITH :
50 European Novels
528pp. Heinemann. £9.50.
0 435 18812 7.

Halfway through *50 European Novels* I began hearing voices.

"Of course Benjamin Constant is a supreme example of the man who is so much a child of his age that he looks eccentric and 'outside' it."

"Oh, quite. You knew about his turbulent sex life?"

"Absolutely! But wouldn't you say it was chiefly his proneness to sophisticated self-analysis that caused his unhappiness?"

"Mm . . . I must say I think his *De la Religion considérée dans sa source, ses formes et ses développements* is a book that has *not* had its due."

At which point the speakers realize they have both been reading the same Reader's Guide and part in consternation, leaving me with my qualms about who or what these books are for.

Certainly they are not for reading at one sitting. Fifty potted biographies of world-famous novelists, fifty plot summaries of British plays, some of them very minor ("In despair Beverley drinks poison. Stukely enters and accuses him of murdering Lewson, but Lewson is not dead. Bates had seemed to fall in with Stukely's plan in order to prevent it. Lewson, warned by Bates, had kept aloof until sufficient evidence had been gathered to unmask Stukely"), and the fates of fifty American poets ("In 1860 he contracted a chill while surveying tree stumps", "pregnant again and seriously ill, she was discovered in an advanced state of double pneumonia", "he died of a heart attack alone in a drab hotel room in Manhattan", "during the composition of his best collection he stepped in front of a truck and was killed", etc, etc) can only make for weariness and gloom.

Cribs, then; but for whom? What gap needed plugging between those dreaded "Aids" ("York Notes"—no connection with York University—"take the Lid off Literature!") and the "up-market" series like the (very reputable) Prentice-Hall Twentieth Century Views? The format of these guides—a brisk foreword, a short biography and account of each poet or play or novel, very brief bibliographies—suggests that at the best they would be used as suggestive introductions (Michael Schmidt talks of "pointing general readers in the direction of the poems") and, at the worst, as short cuts for bluffers.

John Cargill Thompson describes his guide, rather shakily, as aiming "to familiarize the reader with plays he expects to read". Three of the four authors have an embracing scheme; Thompson wants to correct mistaken attitudes to post-Restoration drama, Peter Jones to give "a clear picture of the diverse maturity of American poetry", Seymour-Smith to trace "an outline of the development of the novel in Europe since Rabelais". Michael Schmidt's approach is less synoptic and more engaging.

> From this book emerges no theory of English poetry over six centuries, no "definition" of "English" or "British" as consistent terms, no strict patterns of trends and movements. Instead the book is—I trust—pervaded by a sense of particular voices, particular worlds, and those formative relationships between contemporaries which determine the development of a tradition.

But qualms remain. How can Milton be summed up in seven and a half pages? Why is Clough missing? Why should *La Comédie Humaine* be represented only by *La Cousine Bette*? Where are Brecht's *Threepenny Novel*, and Goethe's *Elective Affinities*, and the representatives of "decadence" such as Huysmans's *A Rebours* or Genet's *Notre-Dame des Fleurs*? Could only *one* female European writer, Mme de Lafayette, be used? (Surely Simone de Beauvoir merits a place.) Should Wallace Stevens be assessed without even a mention of "Sunday Morning"? If Tennyson's "Song", "A spirit haunts the year's last hours" is to be quoted as "distinctive", why not quote all of it? Is it at all illuminating to describe Congreve as "a John the Baptist of the Age of Reason [sharing] with Chekov an immense capacity for pity"?

Such random anxieties resolve themselves into fundamental questions about selection, judgment and style, and it quickly becomes apparent that the "standard format" is only skin deep. Each guide is as good as its author. The reader is faced with books which have an authoritative, official air but which put him at the mercy of individual preferences, hobby-horses and dislikes. Even the format varies: Seymour-Smith's "Introduction" is a brisk summary of methods, while Peter Jones's "Foreword" is a thoughtful essay on Americanness. Seymour-Smith's full, useful index includes terms such as "Epistolary novel", "Idealism", "Mannerism", while Schmidt chooses not to index the technical terms ("ottava rima", etc) explained in the text.

The writers display their prejudices very differently. Schmidt confesses at the outset to a "partiality for the pre- and anti-Romantic poets", and to a distaste for Browning and Swinburne; and some of his most distinguished essays are on Wyatt, Campion, Herrick, Herbert. Thompson chooses some little known plays, and takes every chance to castigate "misleading critical selectivity". Seymour-Smith, stylishly authoritative, assumes that you will either agree—or join the benighted: "Many have missed Gide's humour; they acknowledge his irony, but it is above their heads". Peter Jones, more quietly, gives opinion the air of fact: "the reader experiences only moments of satisfaction" in the last three books of *Paterson*; Plath's "anguished and humane vision cannot be trumped up, cannot be imitated".

If these authoritative voices are to be trusted then they need to be right. Michael Schmidt makes one catastrophic howler, with his invention of a crazed eponymous hero for Tennyson's *Maud* ("Maud, for his part, raves in long lines which are dramatically unconvincing"). Peter Jones misquotes Emily Dickinson as saying that her "Lexicon was her only creation"—for "companion". Thompson has quite a number of misspellings and errors. And he seems to have benefited from George Rowell's *The Victorian Theatre*. This is Thompson on Bulwer Lytton's *The Lady of Lyons*:

> The play's radical sentiments, discreetly dressed in period costume are, at the least, topical in the decade of the Reform Bill, and played a large part in its success.

And this is Rowell:

> Its success is perhaps best attributed to its appeal (discreetly dressed in period costume) to the radical sentiments of the decade of the Reform Bill.

The original is not improved by Thompson's style which is, throughout, egregiously bad: Addison's *Cato* is "certainly no pot-boiler climbing on to a Roman band wagon". Henry Arthur Jones's plea for new, serious plays is not "empty oratory for earlier he had shocked audiences with his treatment of the familiar, girl seduced by the squire dying in her sweetheart's arms after to some extent annulling her shame with good works, story".

Thompson lowers the tone of a series which, whatever its uses, is generally stylish. One might dip in and bring up splendidly energetic accounts of *A Hero of Our Times* or *The Confessions of Zeno*, or some very exact statements about Emily Dickinson ("Her imagination was paradoxically freed and forwarded by those limitations, predispositions, habits and choices") or Carl Sandburg ("He was always compromised by his subject matter"). Michael Schmidt's writing is particularly good. I liked the conclusion to Chaucer ("His eyes were mild and unclouded. . . . He started writing from books, but the world took over his verse"), and the figure of speech whereby Dryden becomes "the architect of that mansion in English literature which makes more demands on the modern reader than any other. One must adjust oneself to well-proportioned rooms in which familiar things are somehow unnatural in their definition and typicality". These qualities—of stylishness, discriminating choice, informed opinion—are admirable; but they lose their virtue if they make it easier for the poems and plays and novels to be themselves neglected.

Working by intuition

By A. S. Byatt

WALTER NASH :
Designs in Prose
228pp. Longman. £10.50.
0 582 29100 3

Walter Nash's title is itself a kind of pun: his book studies both the patterning of prose from the point of view of the observant reader, and the designing of prose patterns by the writer. Thus it is both a manual of rhetoric—couched in clear English, with grammatical terms defined and made available for thinking with—and a "manual of composition". Guides to, or even discussions of, the writing process are now rare, and such as appear are often only on the level of outdated books of etiquette. Current critical fashion concentrates on the reader, the text as *ding-an-sich*, and the language as a form of cultural power. Current educational fashion concentrates on "self-expression" and spontaneity; it eschews formal grammar, learning by rote, and, on the whole, the battle with writing other languages in other grammars. There is therefore, in my view, an immense need for a book which attempts what Dr Nash attempts. And *Designs in Prose* answers a great deal of this need.

It is difficult but necessary to summarize the contents of the book. Chapter headings proceed from "Layout and rhetorical pattern", through "The gaps between sentences", "The Lexicology of composition", "Words in Phrases" and "Sentences in texts" to the broader issues of the relationship between writer and reader, and of work in progress—blocks, planning, selection of words, flow and articulation of paragraphs. The book is illustrated with lively passages, almost all of Nash's own composition. This has the considerable advantage of allowing him to make reasonably authoritative statements about "intentional" and "unintentional" stylistic felicities. It also means that he can offer alternative versions of a description or argument, written with different rhetorical priorities in mind, and make the reader do the work of deciding which, on balance, is the most acceptable style. An example might be chosen from the discussion on "Words in Phrases" where Nash, distinguishing between "noun-aggregating" and "verb-aggregating" phrases, writes two versions of a sentence describing Freud's discovery of the sources of neurosis, in which his "verbal" structure produces metaphors and suggestive adverbs while his "nominal" one seems detached and scientific. Both have their virtues, and it would presumably be possible to write a metaphorical nominal account and a detached verbal and adverbial one. Another virtue of Nash's book is that he appends compositional exercises which invite us to do just that kind of thing.

Much of the strength, and also a possible danger, of Dr Nash's work, is that his precise boldness in tackling the subjective psychological aspects of composition leads him into repeated discussions of the "intuitive" processes of hypothetical writers, as well as the knotty problems of "subliminal" metaphors and "unconscious" design. I take it that he is not positing in his writers of paragraphs and texts a "competence" akin to a Chomskyan competence with fundamental grammatical structures. He is wary about, and plays fair with, the unconscious: his example of a "subliminal" metaphor is drawn, not from his own work, but from a paragraph of Bertrand Russell on architecture, whose stylistic felicity depends on the writer's, and reader's, knowledge of the Latin derivation of "edification", so that, for the Romans to build was to instruct. Dr Nash comments that "The pursuit of subliminal metaphors is perhaps the kind of Snark-hunting that should properly be left to literary critics". He then offers a description, graceful and at least in my experience, accurate, of the way in which the writer may come upon, retrospectively recognize, and then use and develop such metaphors in the text.

But I am bothered by the word "intuitive", although I gather it is a current term in strict linguistics. Take this sentence: "Many figures embody principles intuitively grasped by all exponents of verbal art and artifice from cabinet ministers to copywriters." Or (from the section on writers' blocks): "If the choice of a word is so critical as to bring the writer to a standstill, it may well be because intuition is warning him that he has touched a nodal point in a pattern." What is this "intuition"? Anyone who has it, or thinks he has it, at this level of analytic sophistication, will recognize the experience the word refers to. But from where do we derive the competence (not necessarily in Chomsky's sense, but *lingua franca*) to intuit? My own answer would be that it springs from considerable range of reading, often, as in the case of the Russell "subliminal" metaphor, familiarity with other languages and with etymology, from a head stocked with knowledge of patterns of language old, new, various and—in the case of people like myself who were taught grammar and composition at school—analysed technically at some point, even if with an inadequate vocabulary.

I believe that many modern writers do not have the equipment to "compose" as Dr Nash so elegantly describes them composing. It is my subjective impression as a university teacher that each year my students write simpler sentences, with less variety of phrases, clauses and words, and with almost no figures of speech. I put this down partly to their lack of formal training in writing, and partly to their not having been made to learn large pieces of verse (or prose) by heart. No rhythms sing in their heads to be selected from. The same is true of many of the writers of the twenty-six first novels I have just read for a competition. I believe that both schools and universities should start teaching writing—not necessarily "creative" writing—just complex, flexible writing. Dr Nash's book should be a prescribed text in such writing programmes. It would then cease to appear in some ways to speak only to those who do not really need it—which is my only substantial criticism of it.

Roy Palmer's new anthology for the Everyman Series, *Everyman's Book of British Ballads* (256pp. Dent. £8.95. 0 460 04452 4), contains more than 120 ballads which range from the well-known "Sir Patrick Spens", "Rambling Robin" and "The Draggletail Gipsies" to such rarities as "The Bush of Australia", an erotic song which was banned in East Anglian public houses; its probable origin was a local man's pipe-dream.

The sting of memory

By A. N. Wilson

JOHN CLARE :
The Journal, Essays, and the Journey from Essex
Edited and with an Introduction by Anne Tibble
139pp. Carcanet. £6.95.
0 85635 344 2

John Clare remains, despite numerous attempts to "revive" him by a solid band of intelligent admirers, a neglected poet. His distinctive qualities, observant and at the same time always edgy, are lost in the vapid labelling of him as a mere "nature poet", or in condescending speculations about his madness. It was no mere "nature poet" who could write:

> I seek the shop that's full of noise
> Where signs in gay temptation hing
> And join the ranting, roaring boys
> To blunt old memory's hornet sting.

On the other hand, there was nothing in J. W. and Anne Tibble's *The Prose of John Clare* (1951) to make you think that he was a great prose writer: no letters to compare with Cowper's, no Journal to compare with that of Dorothy Wordsworth. As a record of Clare's personality and sufferings, though, we can be glad of the *Journals* (kept briefly in 1824 when he had just turned thirty) and the *Journey from Essex* (1841). They have now been issued in a thin, attractively illustrated volume, edited once more by Anne Tibble, together with some hitherto unpublished essays from manuscripts in the Peterborough Museum and Art Gallery.

The *Journal* is largely a record of reading and self-improvement, punctuated by observations of the natural world and fears that the author is ill, or on the point of death. "Done nothing" is a repeated, characteristic entry; but the whole is enlivened by some wit, as when Clare takes issue with his London editor about cutting and altering his poetry: "Editors are troubled with nice amendings & if Doctors were as fond of amputation as they are of altering and correcting the world would have nothing but cripples."

We turn with some eagerness to the essays—"On *Taste*", "On Pride", "On Industry", "On Happiness"—but they are feeble stuff. They contain flashes of interest but do not stand comparison with Hazlitt (whom Clare so fervently admired). When we have been waiting 160 years we need to read something more surprising than that "it is our constant duty to be as wise and good as we can", or that "there are many follys and all contemptible ones but the folly of affectation is the most ridiculous of any".

The blurb says that Mrs Tibble, in her introduction, "raises once again the question of Clare's supposed 'madness'". I do not know what there is "supposed" about it. In an admirable introduction Mrs Tibble shows that modern psychologists believe that Clare suffered not from schizophrenia but cyclothymia. He was treated at various asylums, including that of Dr Matthew Allen who looked after so many Victorians, Tennyson included. But this did not prevent Clare from thinking by turns that he was a famous boxer called Jack Randall, or on other occasions Lord Byron. He actually wrote poems called *Don Juan* and *Childe Harold*. You can call this "supposed" madness if you like. It is a supposition to which most readers would subscribe.

In this respect, Mrs Tibble's admirably restrained annotations to the *Journey from Essex* are insufficiently specific. As someone who has done so much to bring Clare's writings recognition, she is perhaps insufficiently aware of what a shadowy figure he is to many readers. Here is the terrifying ending to the *Journey*, when he is met by his wife Patty and his child:

> I was making for the Beehive as fast as I could when a cart met me with a man and woman and a boy in it when nearing me the woman jumped out and caught fast hold of my hands and wished me to get into the cart but I refused and thought her either drunk or mad but when I was told it was my second wife Patty I got in and was soon at Northborough but Mary was not there neither could I get any information about her further than the old story of her being dead six years ago which might be taken from a bran new old Newspaper printed a dozen years ago but I took no notice of the blarney having seen her myself about a twelvemonth ago alive and well and as young as ever.

Mrs Tibble's only note to this passage is: "Clare has crossed out one word: (?) new". It is true that she explains in her introduction that Clare fantastically believed that he had been married to Mary Joyce, his childhood sweetheart. But many readers will be baffled by his lunatic effusions without a note to explain, for instance, the duration of Clare's recurrent fantasy that she had been his wife, or the actual date of her death.

Winston's *Lord Randolph*

By Roy Foster

> *Neither the public nor the historian will permit the statesman moods. He has from the first to assume he has an Aim, a definite Aim, and to pretend to an absolute consistency with that. Those subtle questionings about the very fundamentals of life which plague us all so relentlessly nowadays are supposed to be silenced. He lifts his chin and pursues his Aim explicitly in the sight of all men. Those who have no real political experience can scarcely imagine the immense mental and moral strain there is between one's everyday acts and utterances on the one hand and the "thinking-out" process on the other. It is perplexingly difficult to keep in your mind, fixed and firm, a scheme essentially complex, to keep balancing a swaying possibility while at the same time under jealous, hostile, and stupid observation you tread your part in the platitudinous, quarrelsome, ill-presented march of affairs.*
>
> H. G. Wells, *The New Machiavelli* (1911)

Political biography in the first generation after the Victorians was not the province of Lytton Strachey: the ministers of Gladstone's and Disraeli's cabinets found commemoration in monumental works produced by their own sons and daughters. Such acts of filial piety could be almost unreadable (Gathorne-Hardy on Cranbrook), stridently self-pitying (H. St J. Raikes on his father), useful but unconvincing (Crewe on Rosebery), or at once ponderous and sketchy (Lady Victoria Hicks Beach on Sir Michael); they could also use personal knowledge to add brilliant flourishes which sometimes contrived to obscure rather than illuminate (Lady Gwendolen Cecil on Salisbury), or to dispute the views of the inevitable journalistic observers outside the family circle (Herbert Gladstone on his father in *After Thirty Years*). Of this strange genre (which will inevitably lead to the invention of psychohistoriography as a sub-discipline), no product is more interesting than Winston Churchill's extraordinary *Life of Lord Randolph Churchill*.

No filial relationship of that age (or any other) has been so closely examined by historians; the fact that the doomed and embittered father alternately ignored and actively disliked his eldest son is borne witness to in volumes of pathetic letters. On his father's death in 1895, Winston Churchill wrote much later, "there remained for me only to pursue his aims and vindicate his memory"; this was certainly a maturing ambition. Within seven years of his father's death, Churchill was an MP, a South African War hero, a writer, a rising man: still poor, raw, and insecure, but afflicted with a sense of destiny and on his way to becoming brilliant. In the latter capacity, he could only remind his father's old friends of Lord Randolph, when in his prime and on the make. "In mind and manner he is a strange replica of his father", noted Wilfrid Scawen Blunt in 1903, "with all his father's suddenness and assurance and I should say more than his father's ability. There is just the same *gaminerie* and contempt of the conventional and the same engaging plain spokenness and readiness to understand. As I listened to him recounting conversations he had had with Chamberlain I seemed once more to be listening to Randolph on the subject of Northcote and Salisbury."

In his perceptive study of Churchill's early career, R. Rhodes James, who has also written a life of Lord Randolph, points out the effect on the young politician of concurrently studying his father's life: he rebelled against the tyranny of party, formed ginger-groups, stormed against his leaders, indulged in violent and rather [illegible] "personalities" in his speeches, and "seemed intent upon re-creating his father's career". Equally to be considered, however, is the effect of what was happening in his own career upon the way he wrote his father's biography. For if Churchill's political actions were in some ways intended as a vindication of Lord Randolph's life, the converse may also be true: that the *Life* was at [illegible] partially intended as a vindication of the political somersaults [illegible] executed by the author at [illegible]

For in 1903-4, Churchill was negotiating the change of party which his father never accomplished (though some of Lord Randolph's allies and intimates had done so since his death). For Winston Churchill's purposes, the priority was to show that such an idea never entered his father's head, except as a glancing notion at the beginning of his career: through his own fidelity and constancy to the Party whose members rejected his teachings, Lord Randolph condemned himself to a lonely wilderness, while they condemned themselves to political impotence. It was a careful thesis, worked with close attention; as he told Chamberlain, "my own change of party is an additional reason for care on my part". The political echoes of days gone by were all around him as he wrote, and his own actions were repeating many of his father's patterns. In the summer of 1902, when beginning work on the biography, he was cultivating Rosebery as his father had done: "I should like to bring you and Beach together", he wrote in October; "there lies the chance of a central coalition. 'Tory-Liberal' is a much better name than 'Tory-Democrat' or 'Liberal Imperialist'; and certainly neither paradoxical nor unprecedented. The one real difficulty I have to encounter is the suspicion that I am moved by mere restless ambition: and if some issue—such as Tariff—were to arise that difficulty would disappear."

Thus it was an especially sensitive fact that at the very time this issue obligingly materialized Churchill was charting his father's tergiversations on the issue of Protection in the 1880s. One Birmingham correspondent wrote that Lord Randolph had remarked privately at a meeting "within these walls I am a Fair Trader, outside I don't know anything about Fair Trade; when the masses shout for Fair Trade, then I shall be willing to take up and champion the cause"; the supplier of this information received short shrift, and the anecdote did not find its way into the biography. But in less disreputable ways, the parallels were useful in 1903. Friends feared Churchill's propensity to Fourth Party initiatives on the issue; old colleagues of Lord Randolph's like Ernest Beckett, J. E. Gorst, and Hicks Beach found themselves sounded out by Winston Churchill on the protection question: in October, still a Conservative MP, he raged: "I am an English Liberal. I hate the Tory party, their men, their words and their methods." He seemed to be becoming possessed by the spirit of his father (seen by so many as demonic). There was even, in 1904, a terrible moment when he forgot his words and had to abandon a speech in the Commons, giving rise to dark suppositions about heredity. More significantly, his belabourings of Balfour in 1903 not only recalled his father's treatment of *his* leaders in the early 1880s (while Balfour's deliberate misapprehension of Churchill's position was worthy of Salisbury at his best); but the picture he drew of the young Balfour in his father's biography was one which would, to the impartial onlooker, seem to excuse such treatment.

History repeated itself, or was made to do so: Churchill not only negotiated for a Centre Party pivoting on Hartington, but also played with the idea of contesting his father's old battleground of Central Birmingham (where people were saying, as they had said of Lord Randolph, "that man may call himself what he likes, but he's no more a Tory than I am"). Ghosts were all round him, but this should not obscure the fact that he assiduously called them up. "You will have to look back twenty years to find equal bitterness", he triumphantly told Morley in October 1903; "when I think how easy the Conservatives made the path of the Liberal dissentients in 1886, and how enormously they profited by their aid, I wonder at the tightly locked door with which we seem confronted". Others helped in this: when Churchill's own front bench ostentatiously walked out on a speech in March 1904 it was Gorst who upbraided them, in the name of Lord Randolph, "who of all men in the world deserves well of his party, who was the ornament and leader of that Party in the House of Commons at one period of his life". But if Churchill wished to provoke the passions of his father's heyday, he also wished to retain the curious collusiveness of high politics which had characterized the age: "that line of half-chaffing, half-candid intercourse which prevails between people who know each other though on opposite sides, in this country almost alone of modern countries". And this, as with Lord Randolph, led easily to accusations of unprincipled opportunism.

A photograph of Lord Randolph Churchill taken in Cape Town, and published in his book Men, Mines and Animals in South Africa *(1892).*

The writing of the book and the change of party proceeded together; both climaxed in January 1906, with the publication of the two volumes and Churchill's successful campaign for Manchester as a Liberal. In letters to old friends of his father's, literary details arising from proof-reading are mingled inextricably with the political business in hand. During the Manchester election, he announced:

> I admit I have changed my party. I don't deny it. I am proud of it. When I think of all the labours Lord Randolph Churchill gave to the fortunes of the Conservative Party and the ungrateful way in which he was treated by them when they obtained the power they would never have had but for him, I am delighted that circumstances have enabled me to break with them while I am still young and still have the first energies of my life to give to the popular cause.

Privately, he wrote to Lord James: "This election is the justification of my father's life, and points the moral of my book. The one crowning irretrievable catastrophe which he always dreaded has now overtaken the old gang, and with them, the great party they misruled." The fact that he held this analysis is important for the turn his political career took; but it is equally important for the way that the book was written.

* * *

That Lord Randolph's life was matter for a great biography had been noted as early as his obituary notices; brief accounts and reminiscences appeared in many journals during the later 1890s. The essential materials for a major work, however, were located in the vast collection of political correspondence and memoranda left in the care of Lord Howe and Ernest Beckett, two of Lord Randolph's last political followers as well as his literary executors. With the help of Rosebery's intercession, Churchill obtained full access in the summer of 1902; while demanding "fullest liberty and discretion", he agreed that the executors should have the right "to withhold from publication documents that they might consider injurious to Lord Randolph's memory or injurious to others". This clause was, understandably, not called into play.

By the late summer, Churchill was convinced that "there emerges from these dusty records a great and vivid drama": at the simplest level, he was not only making the acquaintance of a father who had always repelled his efforts to know him, but also interpreting the politics of the age. Helped in his arrangement of the papers by his brother Jack, he was also in close contact with his father's brothers and sisters: notably the Tweedmouths and the Wimbornes, all now prominent Liberals. No less important were those intimates of his father's private life who still wielded political and social power; Mrs Jeune, now Lady St Helier, entertained Winston Churchill as constantly as his father (and introduced him to his future wife); in September he visited his father's old hosts Edward VII at Balmoral and Rosebery at Dalmeny. Travelling up the Nile that Christmas he found himself with the Cassels, Connaughts, Gorst and Hicks Beach, who discussed the biography in detail. He wrote the bulk of the book at Blenheim and at Sir Ernest Cassel's villa; the people and the places took him on a voyage of discovery, and his idealization of Lord Randolph was compounded with an abiding regard for the abilities of his father's contemporaries. As late as 1937 he named "the four most pleasing and brilliant men to whom I have ever listened" as Morley, Chamberlain, Rosebery and Balfour: an impression first formed in the years when he discussed with them his father's dazzling career.

Their reactions were vivid and characteristic. Chamberlain cooperated at once, if on his own terms; he entertained Churchill at Highbury after the latter's break over Free Trade, and provided lengthy and partisan reminiscences [illegible] on the subject of his troubled relationship with Lord Randolph. ("I must have had a great many more real talks with him than I ever had with my own father", wrote Churchill.) Rosebery and James were even more intimately involved in the production; Beach, Hartington, and Salisbury provided letters. Balfour wrote charmingly in 1902 claiming to have lost all Lord Randolph's letters; Louis Jennings's widow wrote extracting a promise that Churchill's account of their quarrel should be fair to both sides, and then produced a memorandum of the incident kept by her husband. Old official colleagues, like West and Godley, were closely consulted; Godley—like Beach, James, FitzGibbon and Lord George Hamilton—provided long written accounts to clarify his reminiscences, suitable portions of which were built into the completed edifice. Goschen was courteously evasive about overtures from Lord Randolph in June 1885 ("I do not, I think, have an inaccurate memory of events; I simply forget"). Brodrick, though a political enemy of father and son, was helpful in obtaining permission to quote India Office material; Iddesleigh's heir gave a frosty permission to publish his father's letters. Morley, who published his *Gladstone* in 1903, provided constructive suggestions as well as interceding with Chamberlain. This relentless process of cultivation produced at least two vital collections of Lord Randolph's letters which have since been lost, those to Wolff and to FitzGibbon: tantalizing portions of which remain enshrined in Lord Randolph's monument.

Of the politicians he approached, the most ambivalent reaction came, appositely, from Rosebery. Churchill thought of him as "my father's greatest friend . . . I inherited this friendship, or rather the possibility of renewing it in another generation. I was anxious to cultivate it for many reasons, of which the first was to learn more about my father from his companion. With some at least of those feelings of awe and attraction which led Boswell to Dr Johnson, I sought occasions to develop the acquaintance of childhood into a grown-up friendship." That the "many reasons" referred to also included Churchill's ambition to integrate Rosebery into a Centre Party alliance adds an additional flavour to the campaign. But Rosebery, so helpful in the initial stages, soon proved recalcitrant.

Though his correspondence with Lord Randolph contains an enormous and possibly significant gap up to 1889, he had written some notes on his friend in the form of an elegant and resonant personal memoir; when Churchill pressed to incorporate sections in his work, Rosebery first claimed that the manuscript had been burnt, then that it was unsuitable for inclusion. This is the story told by their correspondence, though in 1937 Churchill wrote that Rosebery had asked him to include his memoir and he, for reasons of artistic integrity, had demurred. Possibly this had been his initial reaction, afterwards recanted, and Rosebery had taken offence in his inimitable way; he had perfected the technique of suddenly withdrawing into hauteur, or "going up like a balloon", in a contemporary's vivid phrase. Whatever the reason, he refused to have his memoir incorporated, and it appeared, in an extended version, some months after Churchill's great work: a brilliant mixture of character appreciation, monograph and review, rather disingenuously described by Rosebery to Churchill as "an advertisement for your book".

One final figure from Lord Randolph's life was summoned in the process of political table-turning: the raffish Frank Harris, first drawn to Lord Randolph's attention when editor of the *Fortnightly* as a useful political *aide*, and a firm admirer of his. Winston Churchill used him as a literary agent; and Harris was responsible for obtaining £8,000 advances from Macmillan on his behalf. This was all the more laudable, because Harris had in fact wanted to write the book himself. (The fact that his reminiscences of Lord Randolph were to form a scurrilous passage in *My Life and Loves*, including an almost completely [illegible]

unlikely assertion of the manner in which he contracted syphilis, should not conceal the fact that in 1905 his connection with both Churchills was both genuine and appreciably close.)

The collection of papers left by Lord Randolph, and the letters and reminiscences provided by his friends and contemporaries, were constructed by Winston Churchill into a monument which was in many ways a triumph of art. The style was oratorical, but had not yet become flatulent; though deliberate and grand, it has not yet descended into what Evelyn Waugh categorized as "sham Augustan, where the antitheses fall like hammers". This was partly avoided through the quantity of lengthy interpolations built into the text from other sources; his great difficulty, he told Rosebery, was "the graceful weaving of numerous original documents into the regular narrative". This not only diluted a stylistic flavour whose fullness often approaches rotundity; it also ensured the work's lasting importance as a repository of contemporary correspondence and memoranda. The fact that both style and content were adapted to the production of a definite thesis makes them both of additional importance.

For Churchill, confronted with his father's reputation for unconcealed opportunism and embarrassing levity, determined to scale his story up to the dimensions of Greek tragedy. Other filial biographies of dead politicians told pious tales of deserved success; Churchill sought out "the pattern of failure . . . I find it—physical and political—in every page of the story I am writing". Moreover, where others might see Lord Randolph's failure as a visitation of hubris for the sin of self-seeking, Churchill took exactly the opposite view. "It is easy to deal with men whose motive is self-interest", he wrote, "others can cypher out the chances too." But Lord Randolph was a mystery, in his son's eyes. "A veil of the incalculable shrouded the workings of his complex nature. No-one could tell what he would do, or by what motive, lofty or trivial, of conviction or caprice, of irritation or self-sacrifice, he would be governed."

Such an interpretation was aired early on in the rendering of Lord Randolph's career; it was to reach its apotheosis in Churchill's treatment of his father's political virtue in not changing party after his resignation. And it involved taking on many of his father's old enemies. "There is something touching about the fidelity with which he continues to espouse his father's cause and his father's quarrels", wrote Blunt in 1904. The subtlety with which they were presented in print masked an unforgiving attitude. (A correspondent complaining of Churchill's political attacks on Balfour, "one of Lord Randolph's dearest friends", received an unequivocal denial: "I feel bound to declare after a study of the very extensive evidence which has been placed before me that such a statement seems to me extravagant.") Thus it was important to identify Balfour as an integral member of the Fourth Party in *Lord Randolph Churchill*, though most authorities (including Balfour himself) went to some trouble to show that he was not: his defection to the family camp could therefore be implicitly seen as pusillanimous (while Churchill strenuously denied any such implication). For all the ostensibly sympathetic presentation of Salisbury, the reactionary and nepotistic qualities of Cecil government were drawn in a way which could, to a discerning reader, reflect directly upon the present; and when Beach, on reading the proofs, tried to suggest more emphasis upon the personal incompatibility which separated Salisbury and Lord Randolph, Churchill firmly insisted upon retaining the stress on "deep and wide chasms of political difference". They were, indeed, the essence of his argument.

That argument was presented all the more adroitly by the author's using the evidence to hand in a way which conceded unimportant points in order to claim a wider case. This strategy was employed in dealing with Lord Randolph's mingled and irreverent correspondence which, on the surface of things, would seem to state the case for opportunistic cynicism with unanswerable effect. Others [illegible] that this would be the case; [illegible] wrote: "You must exercise your best judgment and [illegible] in deciding the effect which the publication of his views [illegible] would have upon the public estimate of his statesmanship. The cynical, if not Machiavellian tone of many of his letters to me needs to be discounted by my own propensity in the same direction." But by and large, Churchill let the irreverence stand: some friendly critics, including the Duke of Marlborough, felt that the "cynical and flippant" side of Lord Randolph's character came through too clearly—"the reader forms the idea that levity played too large a part in his nature". But this reflected another aspect of the biographer's approach: to quote as freely as possible material that would show similar levity and ruthlessness on the part of others.

Much of this was deleted at proof stage. From the Foreign Office, Lansdowne insisted on dropping comments in Salisbury's correspondence that showed too crudely Iddesleigh's position as a rubber stamp, or the FO view of Bulgaria. Balfour worried intensely about the presentation of Gladstone's approach to Salisbury, via his good offices, in December 1885. Lord James recorded in his diary how he "excised freely" in his copy of Churchill's proofs to save the feelings of those still alive. This encountered an increasingly aggressive reaction from Churchill; he finally told the over-emollient James that he himself retained the copyright power to publish any of Lord Randolph's letters, no matter how indiscreet or hurtful, and was quite prepared "in the ultimate resort" to use this power "as a leverage to procure the liberty to publish" those written by others. "My dear Lord, I am not a damned fool—nor do I wish to offend great people who have been kind to me. I anticipate no difficulties whatever; even when I remember that no account which is not in part disagreeable to someone is ever likely to be amusing or true." But polite blackmail remained an eventual possibility.

In the event, in its general lineaments Churchill's view of his father survived these injections of discretion; and the effect of his attribution of far-ranging and consistent strategies was, if anything, reinforced by the flippant pungencies included from Lord Randolph's letters. The political picture of the 1880s formed an unmistakable outline. The Fourth Party were more than freelance musketeers; they had a general purpose. Chapter Six of Volume One, on "Tory Democracy", could be read as a manifesto of Winston Churchill's in 1904; and Lord Randolph was identified as "a Tory Democrat" as early as 1878—a concept which he was presented as having invented, other Tories being uninterested in working-class possibilities (the rhetorical pedigree in Young England was barely mentioned). Thus Lord Randolph "hesitated" about supporting Salisbury in the early 1880s because of the latter's "lack of liberalism" (the fact that the Fourth Party was in practical terms a front-group for Salisbury in the Commons was thus conveniently lost). The county Tories, according to Churchill, liked Lord Randolph's style but disagreed with his opinions (in fact, given the often ultra-Tory implication of many Fourth Party nostrums, the reverse was often true). He triumphed in the cause of giving the National Union a voice in party organization, and then made peace on equal terms (the very general interpretation of a sell-out in return for elevation to the hierarchy, reiterated after 1906 in a number of publications, was superbly ignored). Overall, bearing the democratic fire out of which sprang up a new Tory electorate, Lord Randolph saved his party. In Winston Churchill's words:

> In truth, at this crisis in their fortunes, the Conservative party was rescued in spite of themselves. A very little and they would never have won the new democracy. But for a narrow chance they might have slipped down into the gulf of departed systems. The forces of wealth and rank, of land and church, must always have exerted vast influence in whatever confederacy they had been locked. Alliances or fusions with Whigs and moderate Liberals must from time to time have secured them spells of office. But the Tory party might easily have failed to gain any support among the masses. They might have lost their hold upon the new foundation of power; and the cleavage in British politics must have become a social, not a political division—upon a line horizontal, not oblique. . . . [Lord Randolph Churchill] accomplished no mean or temporary achievement in so far as he restored the healthy balance of parties, and caused the ancient institutions of the British realm once again to be esteemed among the masses of the British people.

Consistent throughout, Lord Randolph was undone by his consistency: "always an economist", he left the government on a noble issue. And then he was rejected: the issue returned to again and again by Churchill, possibly because it provided a psychological reason for his own rejection by his embittered father. The chosen comparison becomes, instead of the Younger Pitt, the older Charles James Fox. Rejection was made easier by Lord Randolph's romantic commitment to his party: but this condemned him, according to the carefully argued peroration that closed the work.

> Lord Randolph's name will not be recorded upon the bead-roll of either party. The Conservatives, whose forces he so greatly strengthened, the Liberals, some of whose finest principles he notably sustained, must equally regard his life and work with mingled feelings. A politician's character and position are measured in his day by party standards. When he is dead all that he achieved in the name of party is at an end. The eulogies and censures of partisans are powerless to affect his ultimate reputation. The scales wherein he was weighed are broken. The years to come bring weights and measures of their own.
>
> There is an England which stretches far beyond the well-drilled masses who are assembled by party machinery to salute with appropriate acclamation the utterances of their recognized fuglemen; an England of wise men who gaze without self-deception at the failings and follies of both political parties; of brave and earnest men who find in neither function fair scope for the effort that is in them; of "poor men" who increasingly doubt the sincerity of party philanthropy. It was to that England that Lord Randolph Churchill appealed; it was that England he so nearly won; it was by that England he will be justly judged.

Again, the tone is that of an election manifesto; the arguments, those with which Churchill went into battle for Manchester as a Liberal, the month his book was published.

* * *

The question of evidence omitted in the cause of this presentation is an interesting one; a preliminary laundering of the record had already taken place in 1888, with the appearance of Jennings's highly tendentious edition of Lord Randolph's speeches—many of which had had long sections of abuse or inconsistency skilfully deleted.

A certain amount of editing of letters was obviously necessary (Lady Iddesleigh could not be expected to bear with references to her husband as a "cretin", an "old muff", or a "species of earthworm"); but what Churchill was prepared to print, especially in his father's correspondence with Salisbury, was quite exceptional. Salisbury's son blue-pencilled much of the personal abuse contained in letters described with rather suspect naivety by Winston Churchill as "good-humoured". The names of those invaluable go-betweens like Brett or Rothschild, who in a pre-telephone age passed verbal messages too subtle or incriminating for commitment to paper, were similarly excised.

But from the beginning of the story, a more calculating and interpretative censorship was also at work. The more cynical comments in Lord Randolph's letters to his fiancée about the Woodstock election in 1874 are dropped, perhaps reasonably; less reasonable seems the complete silence about Disraeli's anger with Churchill in July 1875 over a letter the latter sent to *The Times* regarding the Prince of Wales's visit to India. In the treatment of Churchill's campaign against Bradlaugh, no mention is made of the fact that Bradlaugh made an issue of an attack on perpetual pensions, especially the Duke of Marlborough's. A blatantly anti-Northcote letter of Churchill's to the *Standard* on June 29, 1882, is ignored; so is an article in the *Fortnightly* showing plans for an assault on the National Union a year before it started.

These details may have escaped the author, but he must have known about Churchill's newspaper interview in November 1884, a Tory-Democratic manifesto which puts a very different complexion upon his withdrawal to India three days later. The discussion of political reform in 1884 is played down, perhaps because of Churchill's several blatant changes of front on the issue; so are the non-official aspects of his Indian secretaryship, such as his approval of Riponism on his visit to the country and the disappointment of the hopes held out of him by Indian politicians when he took office. Selective quotation of a letter from Dufferin is given as evidence that the Viceroy supported Churchill's stance over Connaught's command; in fact, the original reads in a directly contrary sense. The same sorely tried Governor's doubts and worries about the annexation of Burma are ignored, as are the widespread criticism of the step and its bloody and expensive outcome. Ireland was another area of great potential embarrassment, carefully skirted; and though Blunt's correspondence with Churchill shows that he gave him access to those portions of his diary identifying Lord Randolph as a covert Home Ruler in 1885, no mention of them enters Churchill's treatment. (Blunt tactlessly published them in [illegible] as soon as the book came out.)

On personal details, an equally thorny path lay before the biographer. The unhappiness of Lord Randolph's marriage could not, obviously, be mentioned, but the precariousness of his finances could: it was a subject which Churchill believed "biographers of eminent persons" should not "slur over". He did not, however, mention Churchill's growing intimacy with Rothschild, to whom he "turned for everything" by 1886, with whom he entrusted Cabinet secrets, the interests of whose firm he pressed in Persia, India and Burma, who was—to general discomfiture—his closest adviser as Chancellor of the Exchequer, and to whose bank he owed £66,000 when he died. Rothschild, in fact, rates no index mention at all.

To such omissions of fact are added countless textual omissions. A letter to Salisbury reading "the only reason I accepted Iddesleigh was because it was supposed he would act under your direction" becomes (with no evidence of elision) "it was supposed Lord Iddesleigh would act under your direction": the phrase may have been dropped to ease the Iddesleigh family's feelings, but also conceals Churchill's didacticism. A quotation is given "from a letter to his constituents, never published", in 1891; it is not mentioned that this draft letter expressed his decision to resign his seat and leave politics, in one of his recurrent fits of furious pique (and also mentioned his intention in 1887 of joining the Liberal Party). Throughout, the attempt to convey *gravitas* is made by polishing the language actually used in Churchill's letters: "I shall get everything out of [Chamberlain]" becomes "I shall learn more"; "dined with" becomes "met". Purely trivial; but through such tiny, solicitous emendments, the chosen overall portrait of Lord Randolph survived the apparently contrary trend of much of the evidence.

The integral composition of the work, moreover, added greatly to this effect. Churchill showed a brilliant talent for compartmentalization; the Reform arrangements of 1884 were kept strictly separate from the outcome of the National Union controversy (which they helped decide); the Egyptian issue was sharply divided from the parliamentary campaigns with which it interacted. Lord Randolph's [illegible] of the precarious Ministry [illegible] in 1885 by his threat to resign over Connaught's appointment is relegated to the chapter on India (practically an appendix to Volume One). To isolate a theme, or [illegible], quotations are chosen from letters and speeches ranging over five years; the deliberate abandoning of the day-to-day dimension conceals the fact that Lord Randolph's priorities were often tactical, and to see his career from 1881-84 as more or less one phase ("the *enfant terrible*") is simply wrong.

Such careful demonstrations meant that, where opportunism had to be faced, the author could afford to defend it in the ringing tones of Lord Randolph himself ("an unchanging mind is an admirable possession—a possession which I devoutly hope I shall never possess"). Consistency was at best a bourgeois virtue. A. G. Ga[illegible] attributed to Churchill "that [illegible] of concealment which belongs to a caste which never doubts [illegible]" but it was, in terms of the construction of his father's apologia, selectively true.

The interpretation, in fact, [illegible] to be consistently loaded. The Fourth Party's intervention on the Employer's Liability Bill had to be presented as in the interests of the workforce, which it confessedly was not; quotations were artistically selected to show Churchill's struggle over the National Union as far less central and tactical than it was. Recurrent themes of ultra-Toryism in Lord Randolph's speeches and published letters are invariably dropped or ignored. And where Lord Randolph's desire to establish Salisbury as sole leader is dealt with, there is no mention of the conclusion drawn by all contemporaries, that this would inevitably necessitate a new leader in the Commons.

Similarly, at the crisis point of his career, Lord Randolph's views with regard to Irish Home Rule are fiercely defended. There could never have been a compact with Parnell, it is argued, as there [illegible] evidence [illegible] related to politics, whether creditable or not, whether important or petty, seems to have been excluded from his archives". (This did not, however, prevent a good deal of judicious weeding before the papers were bound up into the blue and gold volumes now in Churchill College.) Churchill could not, in any case, make a deal with Parnell, since "the chances of his joining a Conservative administration were undetermined": which contradicts all that has been implied about the position he had attained in mid-1885. Salisbury was similarly exonerated from any trafficking with the devil in 1885 (though in fact Carnarvon and Lord Randolph liked to agree in the late 1880s that he had been prepared to go as far as anyone). And though Churchill's visit to Ulster in February 1886 is neither analysed nor defended, the epigraph to the chapter which deals with it implies a condonation.

On foreign policy, the impression is given throughout that Lord Randolph consulted his superiors; and though Churchill did not have access to the collections of diplomatic documents which amply disprove this, he did have a copy of his father's letter to Lord Roberts about his resignation detailing foreign policy as the reason and remarking that the estimates were "a pretext, but a good one". In the days following his resignation, Churchill described his father as holding aloof from intrigue—his second letter to Salisbury, a patent attempt to broadcast and publicize the grounds of disagreement, is interpreted as "a letter of farewell"; and though Churchill knew that Labouchere's letter of advice on December 23 was in reply to one written by Lord Randolph at the very first instant after his resignation, this would not be guessed by the reader. Nor is the obvious fact, that his subsequent letter to Akers-Douglas was written for publication, and indeed was leaked to the papers, ever referred to; as throughout, the fact that Lord Randolph cultivated journalists and gossips is ignored, in favour of the inference that publicity attached itself to him in a manner both miraculous and fortuitous. Lord Randolph's patent manoeuvres against the ministry in 1887 were similarly left aside ("during the whole of 1887 Lord Randolph had regularly supported his late colleagues"). Sending Churchill material for the biography, Hartington (by then the Duke of Devonshire) had impressed upon him the need for "caution as to those [letters] of 1887"; and this was sedulously obeyed. As Churchill wrote: "Never did he contemplate alliance with the Liberal Party." The resignation had to be shown as totally unplanned; no alliances were tested, no friends were informed, no support was invited. Again, a pattern of tiny textual changes accompanies the thesis. Quoting a letter from Lord Randolph to his mother, "I should give anything to form a government" becomes, more modestly, "I should like to form a government"; in reproducing the sentence "altogether my action is not unjustified by events and the public will soon see it", the latter clause is carefully dropped. The real point of speeches like that of January 31, 1887, a well-advertised and damaging attack on the government, is ignored. The emphasis on Lord Randolph's giving up the Fair Trade cause instead of making an issue of it avoids the fact that his doing so was a response to a Liberal Unionist scare; the protracted and publishing nature of his attacks on his ex-colleagues, over issues like Egypt and the Irish Land Bill, is ignored. It is also implied that all social contact with Salisbury ceased, which is untrue; and the long account of a conversation with the Tsar in January 1888 which Lord Randolph "left" in his papers was in fact written for Salisbury's benefit and was part of an attempt at ingratiation.

Some inaccuracies arose from the paucity of material available in 1902-5: when Churchill wrote that his father never considered joining the Liberals in 1887, or when he wrote that by 1890 Lord Randolph had never made a personal attack on any of his late colleagues, [illegible] I discover any unkind or acrimonious word used about them", he knew nothing of diaries like those of Eddy Hamilton and Loulou [illegible] which so amply contradict [illegible] particularly the inaccuracies in [illegible] parliamentary scenes, [illegible] of some letters and [illegible] errors of dating are [illegible] included in any deliberate [illegible]. But the pattern which [illegible] overall is carefully stressed, [illegible] conforms closely to what Churchill's emotions wanted to be true, as well as what suited his politics; a great weight of minor alterations and major emphases combined to produce a portrait in the painting of which Churchill not only discovered his father, but refashioned him in his own image.

* * *

Constructed as an epic tragedy, often beautifully and always interestingly written, filled with high drama and incisive characterization, and containing as its principal characters many figures still on the political stage, Churchill's life of his father could not fail to be a success; the additional factors of Lord Randolph's fascination and his son's current notoriety made that success all the more assured. The publication of the two volumes in January, 1906, attracted widespread attention; the book sold 2,306 copies in the first week after publication, and did not flag. As the numerous reviews preserved in the Chartwell archives demonstrate, it had a tremendous critical reception. While it would be pointless to quote from these, the recurring impression was that Churchill had produced something very different from the usual work of piety; though *The Times Literary Supplement* saw the work as filially biased, it judged it to be politically impartial and to embody—considering its heredity—surprisingly few lapses of taste. The maturity and grandeur of style caused some eyebrows to be raised, but was generally admired; so was what was seen as an extraordinary impartiality and self-effacement on the part of the biographer.

Rosebery was one of the few who demurred at this: while generally admiring, he thought the narrator was not enough of an unseen wire-puller; the subject of the material should tell his own story. Some guessed that, in the subject's words, the tale might be rather different. J. M. Maclean wrote a particularly interesting piece, taking issue with Churchill on those episodes in which he had been involved, and stressing in a friendly way Lord Randolph's unashamed lack of principle and ability to change sides; Frank Harris, who wrote admiringly of the work at the time, later dismissed it as "two stout volumes, an admirable official Victorian biography, distinguished by the remarkable fairness used to explain every incident in his political career, a politician writing of a politician"; more perceptively he added that Winston Churchill "probably would have written a real life, had not Randolph been his father, and had he not his own political career to consider". Generally, those who found fault with the portrait were exceptions, and did so for odd reasons: such as the *Telegraph*'s argument that Churchill had written about Lord Randolph too frankly ("there are passages in this book which most English sons would have hesitated to write about their fathers"). In private, some reactions were as hostile while being less naive. Theodore Roosevelt wrote:

> I dislike [sic] the father and dislike the son, so I may be prejudiced. Still I feel that, while the biographer and his subject possess real farsightedness, especially in their appreciation of the shortcomings of that "Society" which had so long been dominant in English politics . . . yet they both possess or posset [sic] such levity, lack of sobriety, lack of permanent principle, and an inordinate thirst for that cheap form of admiration which is given to notoriety, as to make them poor public servants. . . . A clever, forceful, rather cheap and vulgar life of that clever, forceful, rather cheap and vulgar egoist.

Generally, Lord Randolph's old friends expressed delight (with an implication of relief). FitzGibbon wrote that the Irish press was delighted with its impartiality and good taste; Rosebery, who had criticized some of the style and production, eventually "could not find a fault"; Chamberlain felt he had "allowed the facts and the letters to tell their own story". Others had slight reservations; Blunt, deeply admiring, still slightly resented the underestimation of Churchill's Home Rule commitment in 1885 (his own belief in which had got him into such trouble). Tim Healy wrote shrewdly: "The impression which your quotations from his speeches leave on me is that they were often selected in vindication of his policy rather than in exhibition of his powers." Lord Tweedmouth, choosing his words carefully, assured Churchill "It gives a very real and faithful presentment to his friends and the public of the best side of your father". But balancing these are the considerable number of letters to Churchill from acquaintances of Lord Randolph's, announcing that Churchill's rendering of his father's career had changed their opinions of the events of twenty years ago.

For the general reaction was to the book's political content ("no one who cares for politics will willingly put it down when it is once in his hands. People who do not care for politics had better not touch it"). This is reflected in the general consensus that the book got better as it went along, and that the early, "personal" chapters could do with pruning. The political difficulties that had been circumvented were equally noted; as Rosebery put it:

> A son, who hardly knew his father as a public man, or not at all, writing his father's life; the story only ten years old, and full of delicacies and resentments; many survivors of those times, whose toes it was impossible to avoid treading upon, still in existence. . . . And the author had normal animosities by leaving his party, and had to write with delicacy about both parties in view of past and present connections.

This was, indeed, the point; and this was Churchill's triumph. Lord Londonderry reacted perfectly when he wrote to Churchill that after reading his book what he most admired in Lord Randolph was the way he never thought of changing his party. Rosebery's monograph, appearing some months later, pressed home the point forcefully indicated by Churchill's two volumes. That point was defined by one solitary commentator, writing a year later, on another subject: "he has endeavoured throughout his story to persuade his readers that, if Lord Randolph had been guided by the logic of his convictions, he would have deserted the Conservative fold and embraced Liberalism; that, at any rate, is the impression which the book leaves on their minds. . . . [He has] perverted [Tory Democracy] into a justification for joining the Liberal ranks."

The political effect of the book was increased by its rapidly gaining the status of a literary classic, if sometimes in rather ill-judged company (Hugh Kingsmill pointed out that the critic who said it ranked with Morley's *Gladstone* and Boswell's *Johnson* was "trying to give an idea of a horse by saying that it is fit only for the knacker's yard and a certain Derby winner"). *Lord Randolph Churchill* was at once pirated for a host of inferior political biographies, and even "memoirs", of the period. As well as provoking a debate in the journals on Tory Democracy contributed to by Hugh Cecil, Herbert Vivian, and others, it directly or indirectly contributed to the genesis of Rosebery's *Lord Randolph Churchill*, Harold Gorst's *The Fourth Party*, and Balfour's *Chapters of Autobiography*. Gorst tried to present his father as the real inspiration of Tory Democracy; Balfour denied a close connection with the Fourth Party and attributed to Lord Randolph the desire to oust Salisbury from the early 1880s; Rosebery amplified Churchill's case for his father as a Liberal *manqué*, putting the case far less equivocally (as befitted a man who had himself kept his political virtue). This helped to carry through Churchill's real message: that there was no place in the Tory Party for men of ideas, then and now. True or false, this obscured the fact that what ideas were actually possessed by Lord Randolph—that most instinctive and febrile of politicians—had often been grounded in pure Toryism.

Nearly half a century and two world wars later, Churchill prepared a new edition of the great *Life*; and by then his priorities had changed. Once more a Conservative, he wrote in the preface to the 1951 edition that "the Tory Democracy of which [Lord Randolph Churchill] was the exponent, has enabled the Conservative Party to preserve its inherent strength and vitality, and to hold its position in spite of world convulsions and ceaseless domestic change; I believe he could take his place in the House of Commons today with less sense of disharmony than any of his contemporaries". But the original thrust of his two volumes of special pleading remained. It was not greatly dislodged by the only subsequent biography of Lord Randolph, written twenty years ago by Mr Rhodes James. While a remarkable production for a very young man, and adding to the picture by pioneering work in the Northcote, Salisbury, Smith and Balfour archives, it left the general portrait of Lord Randolph's career substantially unaltered. (Significantly, in a more controversial and highly perceptive study of Winston Churchill written ten years later, the same author wrote far more ambivalently of his father's achievement.) *Lord Randolph Churchill* endured, in the same whitewash that had dazzled those who beheld *it* in 1906: and that glare had conveniently been refracted on to the architect standing beside.

This achievement had, however, led to a removal of Lord Randolph from his contemporary context. "His political action was guided purely by party considerations", wrote an Irish lawyer who worked with him; "but in this respect he did not differ from his contemporaries, and while he was more capable, he was not less honest than they". Churchill represented his father immortally as a misunderstood Prometheus; hostile opinion retaliated by seeing in him a thwarted Lucifer. But to depict him in either image is, in fact, to elevate him too far above his political fellows.

Lord Randolph Churchill: A Political Life, *from which this extract is taken, will be published by the Oxford University Press later this year. Manuscript quotations appear by permission of the British Library, the Hereford County Record Office, P. Gwynne James, Esq, Churchill College, Cambridge, the Chartwell Trust, H. W. S. Churchill, Esq, the Rt Hon Winston Churchill, MP, and the trustees of the Chatsworth Settlement; quotations from* Winston S. Churchill *by permission of the editors and William Heinemann Ltd.*

A photograph—previously unpublished, and appearing here by permission of the Honourable Miriam Rothschild—of Lord Randolph Churchill (right) with two of his close friends: W. H. Trafford (left), and the first Lord Rothschild ("Natty"). Trafford, a friend from the social world, accompanied Churchill on his frequent withdrawals to the Continent; Rothschild, to whom he "turned for everything", was his chief confidant and adviser when he was Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Residential Area

A once-rich market town
put on the fat of these streets.
Named after aldermen,
they unroll, like speeches
in small committee rooms.

Beyond the scraps of gardens
where a few wallflowers drink
acid brightness from the soil;
behind the sills displaying
sad fingers of cacti,

rooms are tucked in as tight
as drawers in a filing cabinet.
Constantly ruffled
by the business of each other's lives,
their thin walls are betrayals.

Once, in another age,
curiosity was decent.
Only the old remember
as they stare into television,
Who are their neighbours now?

They are the young, who paint
their doors strange colours,
and hurriedly move on,
and the foreign, who shout
and slam their long cars

into mornings made for church-bells
—though Mr Singh, who has burnished
an aura of spices
among the softening cornflakes,
smiles, and is always open.

Carol Rumens

Turning the corner

By Sylvia Secker

CAROLINE HILLIER:
The Bulwark Shore
Thanet and the Cinque Ports
317pp. Eyre Methuen. £7.95.
0 413 39580 4

Caroline Hillier in *The Bulwark Shore* is following an honourable literary tradition—that of the travel essay, exemplified in the past by such writers as H. V. Morton and more recently by J. B. Priestley in *English Journey*. Discursive, scholarly, light in tone, her book possesses all the qualities of the genre. She is both scholar and first-rate journalist, able to catch the telling phrase in a conversation.

Her brief was to explore Kent and East Sussex from Faversham to Seaford: when one realizes that between these points lie the towns of Whitstable, Margate, Deal and Dover—to name only four out of some forty visited—the size of her task becomes apparent. Her journey began on the Isle of Thanet, that prow of Kent which was once truly an island cut off from the rest of the county by the Wantsum channel. It ran from Sandwich to Reculver and ships used it as late as the fifteenth century to avoid the dangerous North Foreland. Now the channel has gone and all that remains are the rivers Stour and Wantsum.

In these pages history jostles beguilingly with the present: Van Gogh in Ramsgate teaching French and German in return for his lodging at 6 Royal Road; Turner at Cliftonville painting his sunsets from the house of Sophie Caroline Booth who later became his housekeeper in London; at Pegwell Bay the hovercraft ferrying its million-odd passengers a year to and from Calais, and on Romney Marsh a descendant of Sir Thomas More talking of old-time smugglers and of Pluto, the fuel supply line for the Allied invasion housed in the bungalows on the Marsh which were deliberately gutted to deceive the Germans. If a criticism can be levelled at Miss Hillier it is that her canvas is too small for the richness of her subject, "Derby Day" compressed into a miniature. The photographs by John Mosley are excellent, and do much to enhance the text.

To do away with William

By John Miller

JANE GARRETT:
The Triumphs of Providence
The Assassination Plot, 1696
289pp. Cambridge University Press. £10.50.
0 521 23346 1

Mention of Jacobitism conjures up thoughts of the risings of 1715 and 1745, of Bonnie Prince Charlie and Culloden, of hopeless heroism, bungling, betrayal and frustrated Scottish nationalism. By 1715, in fact, Jacobitism had become largely a Scottish phenomenon, which in itself doomed it to defeat at the hands of Scotland's more powerful neighbour. In the 1690s, however, English Jacobitism, if less obviously heroic and lacking the romantic appeal of a lost cause, nevertheless posed a serious threat to William III's government, for it provided an obvious vehicle for a wide range of dissatisfactions. Old soldiers loyal to James II, Anglican clergymen who had refused to swear allegiance to William and Mary and Catholics eager to restore their Catholic king were joined by other, less likely figures. Whigs who saw William's regime as corrupt and authoritarian and who resented his giving offices to Tories began to hope that James, restored on suitably stringent conditions, might prove more congenial. While frustrated and ambitious politicians hoped to benefit from a change of ruler, other politicians, for reasons of caution, hedged their bets by maintaining clandestine contact with James's court at Saint Germain-en-Laye.

Jacobitism thus provided an umbrella for a variety of interests and grievances and was able to feed on a similarly varied body of dissatisfaction among the population at large. The great war against France which began in 1689 necessitated the heaviest taxation since the Interregnum, while the fact that it produced few striking military successes led taxpayers to grumble that they were paying vast sums to protect the Dutch against the French without any benefit to England: The recoinage which began in 1696, whereby worn and clipped coin was replaced, led to a drastic (if temporary) shortage of coin and acute economic dislocation. The administration, called upon to perform tasks of unprecedented size and complexity, buckled under the strain and appeared to be riddled with incompetence, corruption and (some said) treachery. Finally, William's rather aloof style of government and the favour that he showed in his fellow-Dutchmen annoyed the xenophobic English.

There was thus ample dissatisfaction, but those who wished to use that dissatisfaction in order to restore James faced two great problems. The first was that the Jacobites were such a diverse mixture of people that it was most unlikely that their efforts could be co-ordinated. The most fundamental division was between those who wanted to restore James unconditionally and those who would do so only in return for guarantees that he would never again abuse his powers. The latter were by far the more numerous but were hampered by James's extreme reluctance to give such guarantees. The second problem was that no Jacobite rising could succeed without the assistance of a French army; otherwise that part of William's army which remained in England would prove more than sufficient to crush any rising in embryo. If Louis XIV could spare the troops from other theatres of war, there still remained the problem of getting them across the Channel which, after the battle of La Hogue in 1692, was controlled by the Dutch and English fleets. Moreover, Louis would not allow his forces to embark until he was sure that a rising was actually under way in England, while the English Jacobites wished to delay rising until the French had landed.

Despite Louis's reservations about the Jacobites' reliability and abilities, he twice prepared a force to invade England. In 1692 his plans were thwarted by the defeat of his fleet at La Hogue. The second attempt, in 1696, forms the subject of this book. There were preparations, whose extent and effectiveness are uncertain, to enlist officers and soldiers for a rising. Arms were purchased, horses prepared. But it became clear that few would risk rising before the French arrived, while Louis stated categorically that his forces would not embark until the English had risen: indeed, he threatened to call off the whole enterprise. It was at this point that a small group of conspirators began to plot to kidnap or assassinate William. They argued that either would cause so much disruption as a rebellion and allow the French to land unopposed. In practice, they soon concentrated on a scheme to kill William on his way back from one of his regular hunting trips to Richmond. A group of almost forty horseman was recruited to overpower his guards and shoot him in his coach. With so many involved, betrayal was always likely. Some of the conspirators turned king's evidence. Nine men were executed for treason, some of them for their part in planning the rising rather than the assassination. Others remained in prison for as long as forty years.

Mrs Garrett's main sources are the depositions and evidence of the conspirators, which she has used carefully and skilfully. She tells a complicated story with clarity, enthusiasm and a lively understanding of character. Occasionally she is shaky on questions of background detail—the Association of 1696, for example, could not have included a promise to uphold the Act of Settlement, which was not passed until 1701—but her handling of the plot, the plotters and the milieu in which they lived is shrewd and sure. The plotters were, in fact, a motley collection. They included simple ex-soldiers who disliked the idea of murder but obeyed orders; one of the Catholic fellows intruded into Magdalen College by James II; a disreputable ex-actor; a rich but semi-literate brewer; and a former lawyer with estates in Hertfordshire and Warwickshire. Brave men and cowards, honest men and knaves, Catholics and Anglicans, they had little in common except a desire to restore King James and (in most cases) a considerable fondness for the bottle. Inevitably there were some willing and eager to betray their fellows in return for pardon and a reward. The trials of those betrayed make up the final part of the book. They make an interesting contrast with the trials of the Popish Plot, in that the judges behaved with great fairness and the accused were almost certainly all guilty of treason.

As it turned out, far from bringing about James's restoration, the Assassination Plot made it far less likely. Whatever people thought of William, the plan to murder him in cold blood appeared morally obtuse. Although James clearly had not authorized or approved the plot and although all those convicted exonerated him from any knowledge of it, Willimite propagandists naturally claimed that he had instigated it. The discovery of the plot sparked off massive and unexpected expressions of popular affection for the hitherto far from popular king. A year later the peace of Ritswijk removed any threat of French help for the Jacobites. By the time that threat reappeared, in 1702, England had a Queen Anne a monarch who was English, a Stuart and far more popular than "Dutch William" had ever been. The failure of the Assassination Plot was thus the beginning of the end of English Jacobitism. Thanks are due to Mrs Garrett for giving us such a perceptive and readable account of it.

Nearly all the King's men

By J. P. Kenyon

JOHN CHILDS:
The Army, James II, and the Glorious Revolution
226pp. Manchester University Press. £14.95.
0 7190 0688 0

This is the promised sequel to John Childs's *The Army of Charles II* (1976). But it is necessarily a rather different kind of book. The organization and structure of the army did not change significantly from one reign to the next, so much that was explained, described and analysed before can now be taken for granted. On the other hand the political role of the army was much more significant under James II than it was under his brother, and calls for a much stricter examination.

The Whig theory that James steadily increased the size of this army throughout the reign, that it was significantly Catholic in its composition, and that it was intended to exert pressure on the civilian population, has now been substantially modified. Childs contends, the reconciliation already begun by John Miller, that despite the size of the army it was increasingly inadequate to deal with Monmouth's Rebellion in 1685, and it was kept up to this level after the emergency was over and significant additions were made under the guidance and stimulus of Louis, whose army was larger. Similarly, Miller has shown that Childs confirms that the Catholic officers, whose commissions James had granted in defiance of the Test Act, proved an unpopular and were few in number; and features throughout the army. The religious allegiance of the other officers is more difficult to assess. Childs gives their the proportions of working class Catholics in the population at large; it is likely that many of them found their way into the army, certainly there was the attempt to create a Catholic regiment of regulars.

Emphasis on the purpose and conduct of the army, Childs is still convinced, was basically an decidedly Whiggish. Previous historians, beginning with Macaulay, have placed too much emphasis on the concentration of the whole army on Hounslow Heath for six weeks each summer. This has detected our attention away from the fact that for the rest of the year, unlike Charles II's army, it was distributed far and wide across the country in units usually too small to have any serious military purpose. Childs lists nearly a hundred such garrisons, as against ten in the previous reign. Their obvious purpose was in fact, to overawe the civil authorities, and Childs produces several examples of their doing so, or preparing to do so, during the protracted electoral campaigns of 1687-88.

But would the army have continued to back James's policy to the end, even if it had resulted in a Catholic-orientated authoritarian government? Childs thinks it would. The rank-and-file, whatever their religion, proved overwhelmingly loyal in the crisis of 1688, and many officers who deserted to the enemy, like Churchill and Cornbury, found, contrary to their expectations, that they could not take their troops with them. And despite these well-publicized desertions, the majority of the officer corps remained loyal, too, though they can have had little confidence in the leadership offered them: very few of them signed on in William III's army after the Revolution. As Childs shows most of them had received their commissions from James, and to this personal loyalty to a particular monarch was added a personal allegiance to a hereditary hierarchy and a rejection of liberal constitutionalism as unmilitary in character. Moreover, their *esprit de corps* was enhanced by their conditions of service. The normal bad relations between the military and civilian population were exacerbated by the division of the army into small widely dispersed and isolated groups. The very good discipline of the army seems to have been mutually (and perhaps because many of the men were conscripts) a source of grievance between 1685 and 1688 and turned against them when the army turned against James. Childs is still convinced, however, that the officers were usually at loggerheads with the local authorities and townspeople. The isolation of the army within the community was confirmed when James insisted that its members were no longer subject to common law.

If anything shook the loyalty of the officer corps it was not James's public policy in itself but the implied threat to their careers and their investments, posed by the wholesale purge of Protestant officers from the Irish army in 1685 and 1686, and more immediately by the random cashiering in 1687 without financial compensation, of a number of prominent English officers who refused to promise James their support in a future parliament. They were quite prepared to keep the army out of politics: it was James, with his unlucky policy, who insisted on bringing politics into the army. After the flight of the Prince of Wales in 1688 there were strong rumours that a political test was to be imposed on all officers, whether they had expectations of a seat in parliament or not. Even so, Childs argues—and he is not alone in this—that the army could and would have resisted William in 1688 had it not been so ineffectually led by its commander-in-chief, Feversham, and by the King himself.

The material on James II's army is not abundant, but such as it is, it has been examined it thoroughly, amongst other things he has made a prosopographical study of 1,250 of its officers. He promises us a further volume on William III, and he will then have completed the first scholarly study of the regular army between the death of Cromwell and the rise of Marlborough.

On minor points his work will be doubtless modified, but if his central thesis is accepted, as I think it must, he, then, must have received notions on James II which he taken out and looked at. His preoccupation with the army can no longer be dismissed as a symptom of the passion for playing soldiers (or a paranoid fear of rebellion or invasion). Nor can the collapse of the army in 1688 be taken for granted, or, at least, taken for granted that it was the inevitable consequence of the conduct of the Revolution.

Empire-building

By M. S. Anderson

J. R. JONES:
Britain and the World 1649-1815
349pp. Fontana, paperback. £2.95.
0 00 633758 9

The period covered by this workmanlike and useful book saw a dramatic transformation of Britain's international position. Until the 1690s she was a second-rate force on the fringes of Europe, unstable, badly governed and racked by vicious internal political struggles. By 1815 she was not merely by far the greatest naval and imperial power in the world but its greatest industrial power as well, in fact the first true world power. This transformation J. R. Jones sketches with both a firm hand for the main outlines and a sensitive touch for illustrative details.

Several broad themes emerge. To almost everyone in Britain relations with the other states of Europe were, during most of this period, a subject of very intensive and secondary importance. They might sometimes be an unfortunate necessity; but their scope, and particularly their cost, must be kept within narrow limits. Ignorance of and indifference in European problems, coupled with an unthinking xenophobia which sometimes startled and disquieted foreigners, meant that there was usually little effective public opinion where foreign policy was concerned, other than a universal condemnation of taking part in the later seventeenth century, to quarrel France as a natural and eternal enemy.

The combination of weakness and isolationism, and the lack of politicians or diplomats with real experience of Europe and its problems, meant that not until 1702 did British statesmen lead their country into a truly major war (William III in the 1690s sensibly relied for the most part on Dutch and Huguenot subordinates).

Moreover foreign policy, particularly in the first half of the period, was only too often influenced by, even at the mercy of, the vicissitudes of party struggles and personal rivalries. The intrigues which brought down Clarendon and Danby, the bitter conflicts of the 1690s, or the struggles between Stanhope and the Walpole-Townshend alliance, are only the more outstanding illustrations of this. It is the role of the "strength of Protestant Jones's discussion that he makes well that Britain's relations with the outside world must be placed within the wider context of the country's political life. Time after time the way in which a war was thought to an end and the terms on which it ended were powerfully influenced by political changes in London. The peace of 1654 with the Dutch and the negotiations of 1712 and 1761-63 with France are obvious examples.

Another theme, more complex and debatable but essentially correct, is the predominance of naval and military considerations, as against commercial or economic ones, in the conduct of British foreign policy. During the eighteenth century a self-confident, often arrogant aristocracy, its domestic position increasingly secure and its self-confidence fed by success, sat firmly in the saddle. To men of this stamp the hopes or grievances of merchants, or the sufferings of workmen, were of secondary importance. Even in the 1790s, therefore, Pitt and his colleagues could continue for years a depressingly unsuccessful struggle in the face of growing popular pressures for peace. Though Jones pays considerable attention to the commercial background to British policy he shows clearly that it was not, as a rule, in any way decisive in the making of that policy. The extent to which Britain's foreign policies were limited by the instruments available for their conduct is also brought out.

The short analytical discussions covering the entire period, of power and military resources on which the book begins are well done. (Though the part discussion of diplomacy is rather functory and in particular it nothing about the considerable, though unplanned, improvement in British diplomatic organization which took place during the eighteenth century.) On a wide range of strategic issues, for example, of importance and difficulty of defending British seaborne trade in time of war, the concise treatment here will be very useful to students for whom the book is the main intended.

It is impossible to quarrel with the author's concentration, from the 1690s onwards, on relations with France. This was inevitable, fixed points around which all the foreign policy revolved, the stone by which almost everything else was judged. But there are a few gaps and omissions in this discussion, at least in the parts of the book. The October of 1791 is twice referred to in passing (once in the introduction) but never discussed or explained. It should have been possible to spare a page for a discussion which, though short-lived, brought Britain within sight of war with Russia, and foreshadowed, though with a long time-lag, of the attitudes which were to be important in the age of Pitt and Disraeli. Again, the Anglo-American relations of 1814 are completely covered by saying at all is said about the war which followed; and the choice of Castlereagh's diplomatic team, of 15, years during which he was by far the greatest and much more consequential in international relations than any of his predecessors, seems by comparison with much of the rest of the book.

Its clarity, balance and sanity this book to a wide audience is to be hoped, more than a student readership. It is a pity, however, that Professor Jones has been "burdened" by his publishers, several unnecessary graphical widows and the appearance of a group of illustrations with unjustified high prices, are less than one would expect from a firm of the quality of Collins.

The beauties of detachment

By Grevel Lindop

JAMES SIMMONS:
Constantly Singing
90pp. Belfast: Blackstaff Press £3.95
0 85640 217 6

Late But in Earnest, James Simmons's second collection of poems, published in 1967, included a poem called "Written, Directed by and Starring . . ." which admitted ruefully that "The scripts I used to write for the young actor—/ Mewere't used." In middle-age, on the other hand, "there's no cod now to my new screen-plays./ They just go on from scene to scene to scene./ The hero never hogs the screen because/ His wife, his children, friends, events intrude." The lines accurately suggest the concerns of Simmons's poetry: the amused self-criticism, the chronicling of personal and public "events", and the way the poet himself remains resolutely "the hero" from script to script.

In one respect, though, the early poem is mistaken, for it judges that "now the star's matured/His parts need character and 'love' is out". *Constantly Singing*, his seventh collection, reveals a character in plenty, but "love" is also prominent and, with its near and dangerous neighbours, marriage and divorce, dominates the book. Simmons has always been ready to report on immediate personal experience, but more than any of the earlier volumes *Constantly Singing* seems a set of dispatches from a personal battlefield: emotion recollected sometimes in tranquillity, but just as often in perplexity or anger.

The new book follows quite soon after *The Selected James Simmons* (also from Blackstaff Press), a selection made by Edna Longley clearly that it was not, as a reviewer in any way decisive in the making of that policy. The extent to which Britain's foreign policies were limited by the instruments available for their conduct is also brought out.

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"Experience" and what the much-sentimentalized bar-room punch-up is really like at close quarters. It is easy enough to dismiss Eliot's vision as "the spiritual DTs", but the tendency to go for the easy laugh and the quick stock-response, a dangerous temptation for the song-writer and "performing" poet, can betray him into conventional falsehoods which are at least as far away from reality. When, in a poem from the 1976 collection, *Judy Garland and the Cold War*, Simmons admits "I wish my lovely lucid songs/had the conviction Elton John's/get from just knowing they're wanted", one senses all the problems of wanting to be wanted, of depending on an audience that may need to be wooed in ways that will cost the poet, eventually, all that he has.

By their truth to experience, the best poems in *Constantly Singing* avoid these dangers, regimenting with detached precision the cheerless pretences of an unhappy marriage.

He kisses children convincingly,
passes plates, eats his tea,
answers questions, sits smoking,
devoutly watches TV.

Who doubts he can keep
this up forever, or till
the audience walks out.

—or the freshness and disorientation of divorce:

when allmony splits the salary
you're poor again, like a student
at forty-five, stering out
of your rented terrace house
at the grey pebble-dashed wall
of the Presbyterian Hall
always in shadow . . .

The poet, however, is still "the star", and persistant irony never quite succeeds in neutralizing a note of self-congratulation. "Meditations in Time of Divorce", the opening poem-sequence of the book, is often strikly moving—"*I will never go back/They will not come to me*. . . ."—but a tendency to autobiography keeps breaking in:

Behold the change-shaper,
now Ulster's leading
lighter of a fire
with screwed up newspaper,
a dish-washer of geeks . . .

Despite the calculated absurdity, and the self-judgment a few lines later, "Pletitudinous old pneud"—an "feels that at some level Simmons means it", as he does when later in the same sequence he describes himself as "in good faith embracing/necessity, constantly singing, not/putting a sour face on it/ in further too obvious contrast to his wife, who is busy "raising the house-beautiful, the car, the kids, looking other resources". This might be dislikeable, but it is not, probably because, like the whole book, "Meditations in Time of Divorce" carries a strong impression of honesty. At times the poems admit pomposity, but they are not pompous. "After Eden", perhaps the best poem in the book, shows the poet making a furtive visit to the family home, "Home after midnight, wouzy with drink/in a quick forray for old tapes,"—and presents with equal clarity and innocence the sensation of punching his wife on the nose—"When he first hit, pieces of glass tinkled and rolled on the pavement. Again they stare, sharing intimate touch—her nose, his knuckles, shire"—and his "last glimpse of her,

standing
in faded chiffon nightwear, humble,
proud of Gerry Kelly's Newsagent"
desperate sanity a senseless tension murder:

"Here's a song for Gerry Kelly.
Listen carefully and see
what's the point of the story.
Mind no hero to me.
Ten hours on duty a week,
closed at three.
He made a decent living
on him that nos . . .
Put the evening papers
on sale, selling sweets
at the time, the town, two gunmen
cut off the streets.

Clearly these styles impose own limitations, and there are and inadvertences which such a dramatic manner, in this age probably cannot reach. Simmons is aware of the whole, but his enterprise, straightforward, is a reproach to Eliot. "No place to look for inspiration/ or confidence, preferring compound swine/ to retreat/ his ground to meet/ the hollow men/ see the hollow men/ and fight", as if generation "Interior Decorating" drives to outdo the memorable opening line of Larkin's "Sad Steps": Larkin wrote "Groping back to bed after a piss . . ", so Simmons begins, grandiloquently, "One night I strode from you to ease my bowels". Donald Davie's sombre and often-quoted "A man who ought to know me/wrote in a review/my emotional life was meagre" seems to be emulated in the last lines of "At the Post Office": "The critic, Mrs Longley, was to write/years after, 'He must have had very large illusions.' By God she was right."

Occasionally plainness of speech can lapse into dullness, the language slithering into a mixture of dead metaphors, as when, at the end of "Five American Sonnets", "my host breezed in/just as our dying fall was wasting thin", and the love poems lapse sometimes into soft-porn cliché: "our glowing bellies, heaving/in ecstasy" and so on. At other times, as if to hint that he is aware of broader perspectives, Simmons can be over-allusive, and *Constantly Singing* is studded with phrases from the Masters—Shakespeare, Donne, Crashaw, Wordsworth, Browning, Whitmen and, of course, Yeats—most of which add very little, while some are absurdly inappropriate, as when, in "Ballad of a Marriage", a husband enquires

"This sweet mysterious country
explored by my right hand.
Am I the first, my wife, that's hurst
into this silent land?"

—the Coleridge echo seeming merely a distracting, embarrassed mannerism. Yet, typically, "Ballad of a Marriage" recovers almost immediately. The husband's response to the answer he feared is precisely and painfully delineated:

I'd slept with girls myself, but I
was trembling, I was hating
these men, and her, and yet I found
her stories titillating:
first fascination, then disgust;
first pain and then a surge of lust.

And self-judgement is delivered unflinchingly: "Freedom and truth, by which I swear,/in fact were more than I could bear."

The personal, autobiographical tone of *Constantly Singing* also governs its one poem about the political situation in Ulster, "Coleraine: 1977", which describes the psychological impact of a bombing—not a murderous outrage but rather an event that seems, in its context, an almost trivial affair of noise and broken glass. Simmons's account, excellent merely as documentary description, is muted and self-critical, sensing the inadequacy of his own responses and the shallowness of the liberal aestheticism which seems the only present alternative to barbarism. The poet and his friends are "middle-class magi with no star/in the heavens or on our chests", who "all have a certain flair/for enjoying each other/in a mildly hedonistic fashion". When the explosion is heard, other postures appear: first the stilted indignation, then the furtive, prurient curiosity: "quick, cautious, we slide into the night air/like the rest of Coleraine . . ". The poem's most powerful statement is a confession of helplessness:

You might define decadence
by our ambivalence, unable to see
or hear
exactly what's going on, only
the old words and music, our eyes
curiously impaired.
Shops, churches, uniforms look
as they used to, but don't fill
the role. The rare policeman
with wit and integrity
is a poignant figure, like the
clergyman
who embodies faith, or the
rigorous teacher.

One can scarcely avoid comparing this bleak acepticism, this hesitancy of thought and rhythm, with the forceful, almost visceral reactions of Heaney: his instinctive revulsion, for example, at the sight of British armoured cars and his grimly sympathetic understanding of atavistic tribal conflict. To admit that Heaney's treatment of political themes has so far been more powerful than Simmons's may be to say only that Simmons has undertaken the harder task. The lyric tradition accommodates itself rather easily to the terrible beauty of commitment; the beauties of scepticism and detachment demand an ability to use tradition against itself, to criticize the stock response—as Eliot was so often able to do.

In "No Land is Waste" Simmons felt able to dismiss Eliot's question:

"What are the roots that clutch,
what branches grow
out of this stony rubbish. "I
don't know.

What roots? What stony rubbish?
What rats? Where?
Visions of horror conjured out of
air,

yet similar visions seem to trouble him in "Coleraine: 1977", where the streets are cluttered with "huge concrete vase/that form a barrier./ Inside the vases, in soil, by civil edict/geraniums flower", and where, after the bombing,

window glass is scattered in a
familiar shap,
splinters scattered through the fruit
and vegetables. Sheer noise
distracted us, a showy trick,
melodramatic politics.

Bullied again, we have leant over backwards to hear nothing.

Constantly Singing carries, throughout, the warmth of lived experience. At some points Simmons seems not to be writing at full pressure; and there are indications that both his view of poetry and an undue sense of his own importance may be placing limitations on his work. But he has produced another lively, challenging book, at its best soothingly direct and memorably terse, presenting (as he has written in a poem about jazz) "Tough reasonableness and lyric grace/together, in poor man's dialect".

In the interstices of war

By Roger Bowen

VICTOR SELWYN, ERIK DE MAUNY, IAN FLETCHER, G. S. FRASER, JOHN WALLER (Editors):
Return to Oasis
War Poems and Recollections from the Middle East 1940-1946
254pp. Shepheard-Walwyn. £7.50 (£3.50 paperback).
0 85683 047 X

Vernon Scannell has suggested that, unlike the First World War, with its mud and trenches, the Second World War was without a "fixed imaginative landscape", without a "single archetypal battlefield that became rooted in the European imagination". While not emblematic of the entire conflict, the North African campaign, waged from June 1940 to May 1943, can at least be said to possess its own ground, indeed its own spirit of place. Though it was dramatically mobile, this struggle is none the less anchored in our minds to an unchanging, sterile landscape, a place of sand and fossil, where, to quote Keith Douglas, "the vegetation is of iron" and where "the dead are powdered by the wind "till they are like dolls". In his foreword to *Elegies for the Dead in Cyrenaica*, Hamish Henderson, a member of the Intelligence Corps, quotes a German officer: "Africa changes everything. In reality we are allies, and the desert is our common enemy."

In a memorandum prepared for *Return to Oasis*, G. S. Fraser asserts that the Middle East "produced far more—and at times even finer—poetry than all the years of action on the Western Front in World War One". Apart from the many amateur poets hiding in the ranks, an unusual number of writers were posted to staff Intelligence units in Cairo. The Egyptian capital became a wartime cultural centre: those in uniform were joined by Mediterranean castaways" like Lawrence Durrell, Bernard Spencer, and George Seferis. Their world was the Anglo-Egyptian Union, Groppi's Café, and Music for All. During these years the city hosted five major literary journals: Personal *Landscape*, edited by Durrell, Spencer, and Robin Fedden, and *Salamander*, the child of Keith Bellan. The contributors were teachers, civil servants, soldiers: all exiles, all, in the larger sense, prisoners of war.

Three young servicemen, Denis Saunders, Victor Selwyn, and David Burk, launch of the idea of *Oasis*: *The Middle East Anthology of Poetry from the Forces*, and with the officer blessing of the Commander in Chief and help from the Salamander Society it was published in September 1943, some months after the final battles of the Tunisian campaign. *Return to Oasis* reprints the original volume, adds a selection of other published Middle East verse, and also includes a section comprising unpublished soldiers' poems and ballads collected over the past four years by the editors. *Oasis* Trust. Vignettes, biographies, notes, a chronology and maps augment this material, and there is a new preface by Victor Selwyn, a lively account of Cairo's literary life by Durrell, and two prefatory notes, by Ian Fletcher and the late G. S. Fraser. Arriving thirty-five years after the end of the war this handsome anthology has a bold, if not unexpected air.

As Fletcher explains, the book is primarily a document and a memorial—it preserves a unique moment in history and provides a record of a unique community. As such it is of considerable worth. But, predictably perhaps, an essential conservatism and a lack of sophistication characterize much of the writing: rarely found sources, memories of Georgian vistas recall, like mirages from the sand, Kipling-esque laments for "Archie, Johnnie and me", and scrupulous cataloguing of the bread-and-butter realities of "M & Y" and "Benghazi cookers". A few poems break new ground: G. S. Fraser's "Egypt", with its contemplation of Cairo's "airless envelope" and the end of "magnificent Empire", leaves more permanent images and might well be regarded as the centrepiece of the 1943 edition. In the second section, clearly dominated by Keith Douglas, there are Henderson's First and Second Elegies, the harsh economy of Sorley MacLean's "Death Valley", Fletcher's tense depiction of "A Unguiet Lifee at the Base", and selections from Gavin Ewart and Alan Ross.

The majority of the contributions fall into the two categories Fletcher candidly defines: "the educated voices of those who were moved . . . to a poetry of occasion, and . . . the record of the almost inarticulate, the artless, the dull." The latter serves the documentary function of the book rather better than the self-conscious menace of many of the "educated voices": the infantryman, "half-scared" and trouserless at Tobruk ("water melons, grape"), is more memorable than the observation that "the thump of guns/Sound fearful echo in the grenaded/Beating of the heart". There is a patriotic tribute to the Northumberland Fusiliers, battling the "Eyetie host" and the "Hun", a less than enlightened regard for the native population in "Moferni, Afterthought"; but helpless sympathy elsewhere for the awesome poverty. There are three prophesying peace and those mourning the dead, and the travellor's way is consistently alert. All testify to the vagaries of survival. Erik de Mauny recalls "poetry came, when least expected, in the interstices of a generally agitated existence, in the rush of sudden contrasts, and in the recognition that, whatever else changes, one's own mortality does not."

The editors have instead the criterion for the original publication stands: what men in uniform wrote. The desire to preserve a common experience was understandable in 1943, it seems less so now. The chummy atmosphere of a serviceman's reunion, especially in the prose reminiscences—there is much talk of Jerry and Basil Wallsh—blinds at the anthology's missed opportunity to build on the experiment of the first edition and acknowledge the *shared* exile of soldier and civilian. The poems written in Egypt during the war by Durrell, Spencer, and Terence Tiller are distinguished and we need to be reminded of them. It is in Lecturing to the Troops that Tiller, ironically, recalls a sense of the gulf between himself, "taut and careless with a virgin air", and the fighting men, a generation which *Return to Oasis* has to maintain: "They sit like shrubs among the cans and deserts thistle/ In the trees, broken shade and the coarse/ Intrepid violent mouth, wanting dawn the brown evening, wanting girls and beer."

Flutterings of the phoenix

By Geoffrey Parker

HENRY KAMEN:
Spain in the Later Seventeenth Century 1665-1700
418pp. Longman. £17.50.
0 582 49035 7

It seems incredible that the first satisfactory history of Spain under her last Habsburg king, Charles II, should only appear in 1980. Spain, after all, had dominated European politics for more than a century before his accession; how could her post-imperial development be so ignored? Yet until now there has been nothing to set beside Pierre Goubert's *Louis XIV and twenty million Frenchmen* or J. R. Jones's *England 1658-1714*. The last full-length studies of the reign of Charles the Bewitched, as he was known to contemporaries, were published in 1911 (by the Duke of Maura) and 1912 (by Julián Juderías) and dealt only with the court and its politics. Of the standard textbooks available in English, John Elliott devoted only eighteen pages of *Imperial Spain* to Charles II, and even John Lynch's *Spain under the Habsburgs* covered the last of the line in a mere fifty-one pages.

So Henry Kamen's latest book fills an enormous gap for all students of Spanish history: it has no rivals in any language. He presents an analysis drawn not only from his wide reading of the available literature, but adorned with the fruits of a lifetime of patient labour in the archives of the peninsula. His main thesis is that Spain's decline, which was apparent during the reign of Philip III (1598-1621) and acute during that of his son Philip IV (1621-65), gradually abated after the 1650s. "The phoenix", in the phrase of a Catalan subject of Charles II, "began to rise from its ashes", so that by 1700 the Spanish kingdoms were far stronger—demographically, economically, even intellectually—than they had been a half-century before. Only the appalling paralysis of the central government, under the impotent and demented Charles II, the "least-travelled monarch in Spanish history" who possibly "did not make a single major decision throughout his reign", disguised from foreign observers the recovery of his realm. The French, who tried to exaggerate Spain's debility under Charles II in order to present the Bourbon succession as Spain's salvation, were pleasantly surprised when after 1700 they came into their own.

It is one of the great strengths of this book that Dr Kamen studies not only Castile, which covers roughly three-quarters of the Spanish kingdoms, but also the Basque provinces, Navarre, Aragon, Catalonia and especially Valencia; for these were the areas that registered recovery soonest. When Kamen makes a statement about Charles II's Spain, it is as often buttressed by details from the eastern or the northern provinces as from the core-state of Castile. And yet the reader is sometimes left to wonder whether the data provided are sufficient.

In a section entitled, with disarming simplicity, "The weather, 1665-1700", the surviving anecdotes about freak weather conditions noted by contemporaries are marshalled for each year of the period. All too often, there is not enough to sustain a general conclusion. For example, it would seem that only one person in the whole of Spain, a resident of Valencia, saw fit to record anything about the climate during the year 1697, for we read:

> No information on the weather of 1697 is available apart from Benevent's account in Valencia of the memorable fourth of February when "the air was so cold that within doors the jugs of water froze and at night the fountain in the market froze so that all of it looked like one block of ice, and plants and trees froze and many old people died".

But what does that single piece of information, couched in its Hemingwayesque style, tell us about the climate of Spain in 1697? Was the weather like that in other parts of the peninsula—more a subcontinent than a country, as Kamen reminds us elsewhere, with many climates and not just one? The silence of the other sources suggests that the experience of Valencia was unique, for had such low temperatures prevailed elsewhere, they would doubtless have been recorded—like the *Grand hiver* of 1709-10 in France, which has left a trace in almost every document of the time. Yet if the conditions in Valencia were unique, do they matter to the modern reader? After all, when hailstones as big as pigeon eggs lash Tunbridge Wells in June, the rest of England is scarcely affected.

There are other subjects for which Kamen provides lists of similar but unrelated data from many different times and places in an attempt to remedy the lack of global figures for the phenomena he describes. His chapter on demography, for example, sometimes bases plausible generalizations on extremely slender foundations. "Wives in Galicia", he confidently informs us, "completed their family and had their last child at about forty-one years. A completed family managed to have, on average, 5.7 children." This is interesting; but the supporting evidence consists of detailed studies of only five disparate communities, some covering the eighteenth and not the seventeenth century. Again, on page 41 we are told: "Wives tended to conceive immediately after marriage. Pedralba [near Valencia], where the marriage age was younger, is an exception: there the first child came after about twenty months". But surely there is not yet enough evidence available to know whether seventeenth-century Pedralba was an exception or not? So few Spanish villages have been the subject of proper demographic study that, although one may seem unique today, many more just like it may be discovered by historians during the next few years.

The chapter on "The urban environment" is open to the same kind of objection, Kamen again presenting some striking generalizations on the basis of very little evidence. He states:

> The general impression from these three Castilian towns is that those in active employment seldom exceeded one-fifth of the population. Casual labourers (jornaleros) and non-productive groups such as widows and the poor, generally made up between half and two-thirds of residents. . . . Towns, it would seem, consisted principally of a vast pool of unemployed.

But these speculations—and they are no more than that—are founded on a single census carried out at different dates in three separate small towns, all of them in decline: Talavera de la Reina in 1632, with a population of perhaps 6,000; Avila and tiny Arévalo in 1683, with under 6,000 inhabitants between them. If 80 per cent of their people were indeed idle, the decline in their prosperity is hardly a source for wonderment; yet if Castile's general decline was reversed in the later seventeenth century, as Kamen so convincingly argues from other sources, then the social structure of these three towns cannot be typical. Once again, the reader is left to reflect on the significance of what he is being told.

Of course, Kamen is far too good a historian not to be aware of the dangers inherent in such fragmentary data. From time to time he issues suitable warnings to his readers: "In the present state of our knowledge", he notes at one point, "it is unwise to assume that any of the regional evidence we have cited is typical of Spain as a whole". More often, he offers us proxy data—either from other countries at the same time, or from Spain at other times—that appear to confirm the typicality of the local examples to hand. Above all, Kamen has such a sharp and accurate sense of the past that one is rarely moved to disagree either with the balance of his evidence or with the conclusions he draws from it. The only passages with which the present reviewer felt unhappy were those concerning crime. "Crime levels in Spain were indubitably low", Kamen announces on page 167, adding six pages later that "most crime was urban". But since only recorded crime, and sometimes only prosecuted crime, is susceptible to analysis, low totals may be deceptive. It might be that the "dark figure" of crimes committed but never reported was as large in Spain as it was elsewhere in early modern Europe, bringing the total crime rate up to that of other countries; certainly the "dark figure" was always greater in the countryside than in the towns, which explains perhaps why the surviving records suggest that "most crime was urban".

In a couple of places, finally, Kamen's findings have already been overtaken by recently published work: on the recovery of American treasure shipments to Spain after 1650, Michel Morineau has prepared some striking figures which rather modify the picture given here, while the pages on the Inquisition will have to be revised to take account of the exciting new quantitative findings of Gustav Henningsen and his colleagues, who have analysed the 50,000 or so surviving cases heard by the Holy Office.

But these are only minor caveats, a small price to pay for a pioneering study like this one. Dr Kamen has always chosen to work on the frontiers of historical knowledge, preparing the first detailed map of a previously unknown area. Here, where a leap of faith is called for to link the evidence and the deductions to be drawn from it, he has proved that he deserves our confidence. It will be a long time before the present book can be replaced.

Fragility on the farm

By Roger Price

HUGH CLOUT:
Agriculture in France on the Eve of the Railway Age
239pp. Croom Helm. £19.95.
0 85664 919 8

The prime objective of this book is to analyse the returns of an enquiry into agriculture conducted in France in the mid-1830s and provide researchers with a "datum plane" from which the subsequent progress of French agriculture might be measured. By employing the techniques of quantitative cartography, Hugh Clout hopes to construct a less impressionistic overview of the state of French farming than that previously offered.

His methodology cannot be faulted: the reader is presented with a large number of clearly drawn maps showing land use, crop yields, prices, dietary variations, and so on, with frequent references to a wide range of other sources of information. Yet in spite of the clarity of presentation, and the apparent certainty offered by the statistical information from the original enquiry, there is a very real sense in which Clout's basic source, and inevitably therefore his findings, remain impressionistic. As he himself admits, historians are unable to agree on the utility of the 1830s enquiry; it has quite recently been described both as "sincere and coherent" and as "very uneven and often suspect". The second opinion is the more reasonable given that the data were collected by mayors, who were frequently unwilling to spend much time answering questionnaires which they did not always understand, and which they often believed were to be used for fiscal purposes.

There is no way of checking the accuracy of the enquiry, save by critical comparison with the mass of contemporary and more recent monographs, so that, as Clout stresses, all the *Statistique* offers in the last resort is "an *impression* of agricultural conditions during the July Monarchy" (my emphasis). It does, however, allow him to present the clearest view of the rural economy at a given point in time which anyone has yet achieved, and to make an important contribution to the debate on the character of French rural society in the first half of the nineteenth century.

His conclusions support Morineau's contention that an "agricultural revolution" did not occur in France before the 1850s. Although food production was expanding more rapidly than population, this was essentially due to land clearance and piecemeal improvement rather than to the widespread adoption of new systems of cultivation. Grain production, often in unsuitable natural conditions, remained the essential objective, and food supply was extremely susceptible to climatically influenced fluctuations in yields.

Clout's stress is on the fragility of existing agricultural systems and the insecurity experienced by consumers, which he further highlights by means of an analysis of their diet. Allowing for substantial variations between localities because of the overwhelming dependence on local staples, he points out the inadequacy of diets heavily based on carbohydrates, and the effects on health of deficiencies in proteins and vitamins.

Consumer insecurity was compounded by the slowness and high cost of transport. In such circumstances market mechanisms could not perform the function of balancing supply and demand efficiently, and as a result poor harvests continued to produce panic and widespread civil disorder. Although detailed information on internal trade is lacking, Clout provides a very useful analysis of the primary characteristics of the trade in wheat, identifying areas of surplus and of deficit and mapping the flows between them.

Physical geography was of course the essential determinant of land use. Soil fertility and climate were of crucial significance, but so also were communications networks. French farming might be divided into two broad sectors—commercial and semi-subsistence—with the development of technically advanced commercial farming occurring on the plains and in the valleys, in proximity to the relatively efficient axes of communication by road and water which provided access to expanding urban centres. Flanders and the Paris region provided the most obvious examples of high-yield, market-oriented farming—but they remained exceptional.

Although the gradual improvement in communications meant easier access to urban markets, and the pace of structural change in the economy was accelerating, the July Monarchy was a period in which population pressure on food resources grew intense, as the culmination of a century of population growth. Only after the 1850s, with the fundamental transformation of communications and of market structures brought about by the advent of railways, was the fear of famine finally banished.

The eats and the eat-nots

By Olwen H. Hufton

MICHEL VOVELLE:
Ville et campagne au 18e siècle
Chartres et la Beauce
307pp. Paris: Éditions Sociales
2 209 05382 0

The traveller who approaches Chartres from the north is guaranteed an unforgettable visual experience. Several miles before the town itself is visible, as if rising from earthen roots, the massive cathedral spire looms over the flat cornfields of the region once graphically described as "le steppe beauceronne". The dingy characterless villages slip by unnoticed—except perhaps by those conscious of France's literary heritage, for this is Zola territory, cradle of the grasping peasants of *La Terre*. Most are transfixed by the spectacle of the towering cathedral and the seemingly endless fields of corn.

This image should be borne in mind when confronting M. Vovelle's collection of essays, most of which are of an austere statistical kind because the recurrent theme of the book is the uneasy relationship between cathedral (or capitular clergy) and citizenry, and between both these and the peasantry of the Beauce. The collection is a saga of conflicts and hatreds most of which were economic in origin. The capitular clergy were the single greatest landowner of the region but nobility and bourgeois *rentiers* were also quick to invest in some of France's most fertile territory. Chartres, in short, lived off rents from the Beauce and much urban-owned land was leased to a few substantial tenant-farmers. Given the proximity of the Paris market, landlord and surplus producer could make healthy profits, but the bulk of the peasantry, *microproprietaires* and day-labourers, were the victims of soaring bread prices and underemployment in the difficult economic conditions of the closing decades of the *ancien régime*. In no region of France was social polarization so marked and no area was more torn by bread riots and market disturbances. Indeed, the essay here on *taxation populaire* in 1792 exposes with dazzling clarity how trapped the poor peasant cultivators and artisans of the Beauce felt between capitalist exploiters and the great gaping mouth of Paris, and how direct action was their frail means of drawing attention to their plight.

Extreme social polarization was the prime cause of yet another Beauceron custom, pervasive vagrancy and brigandage. From 1740 and into the opening decades of the nineteenth century, large farmers, merchants travelling between Paris and Orleans, and local elites were the uncomfortable victims of muggings, robberies, murder and arson by successive bands of thieves. Some of these bands were allegedly 300 strong but association was loose and most crimes were committed by mere handfuls of men. Recruited from and readily absorbed into the ranks of the day-labourers and artisans of the parishes, these bands were virtually ineradicable. Not only did they enjoy popular collusion but there were no real forces of order to contain them. Chartres before 1789 had six policemen! In his essay on the "bande d'Orgères", Vovelle describes how the most violent of these bands contrived to exist, within the context of the Revolution, by labouring in the fields in summer and thieving for the rest of the year. To curtail their activities the state was forced to turn the military against them; but the show trials destroyed only a fraction of those involved, and drove the rest temporarily underground.

One is struck by the a-political quality of both Chartres and the surrounding region. The antipathy generally felt towards the outsiders of the aristocratic capitular clergy, recorded in one essay, clearly spent itself when, as an institution, they were abolished in 1790. No one rallied in their support. There was no Great Fear in 1789: no revolutionary fervour yet no counter-revolutionary fanaticism. All emotions focused upon the essential issue of grain supplies. Since the government in Paris had a scale of priorities in which feeding the capital was paramount and the interests of the Beauceron labourer were low down the list, it is easy to appreciate why the region never demonstrated revolutionary commitment. Less easy is it to understand why it never became overtly counter-revolutionary. Perhaps it was too close to the capital to attempt open revolt; perhaps many had crossed the threshold into the despairing world of the perpetually hungry. When *taxation populaire* failed in 1792 the only other weapon was brigandage and Beauceron brigands had no political colours.

Truands et Misérables dans l'Europe moderne (1350-1600), edited by Bronislaw Geremek (251pp. Paris: Éditions Gallimard/Julliard) is a collection of archive material and literary texts chronicling the fortunes of Europe's unfortunate misfits—outlaws, vagabonds, the impoverished or unemployed—of an earlier era. The chapters are headed "Archives criminelles: le malfaiteur"; "Archives criminelles: la bande"; "Les vagabonds: législation et répression"; "Le mauvais pauvre: stéréotype et réalité"; "Charité et répression: vers l'exclusion du pauvre"; "Les miroirs de la gueuserie"; and "Les Hommes sans maître". The alarming formula "prisonnier estoit digne de mort comme inutile au monde" ("the prisoner deserved to die, being useless to the world") in the record of trial proceedings, though it does not recur frequently, nevertheless indicates a general attitude. The book builds up a fascinating picture of late-medieval vagrancy, crime and punishment, and of the judicial or administrative responses which gradually established an identity between vagabondage and lawlessness. Twenty-two illustrations reproduced from paintings and engravings of the period vividly convey the [illegible] of these "poids inutile de la terre".

The transmutation of a master

By Simon Karlinsky

RONALD HINGLEY (Translator and Editor):
The Oxford Chekhov
Volume 1
Short plays
222pp. £9.50.
0 19 2113496

Volume 2
Platonov
Ivanov
The Seagull
376pp. £12.50.
0 19 211347X

Volume 3
Uncle Vanya
Three Sisters
The Cherry Orchard
The Wood Demon
364pp. £12.50.
0 19 211 3399

Volume 4
Stories 1888-1889
300pp. £14.
0 19 211 3895

Volume 5
Stories 1889-1891
270pp. £10.50.
0 19 211 3534

Volume 6
Stories 1892-1893
330pp. £12.50.
0 19 211 3631

Volume 7
Stories 1893-1895
286pp. £10.
0 19 211 2887

Volume 8
Stories 1895-1897
360pp. £9.50.
0 19 211 340 2

Volume 9
Stories 1898
348pp. £12.50.
0 19 211 383 6
Oxford University Press

"Sooner or later, I'll have to publish [my] stories in numbered volumes", Anton Chekhov wrote in 1898 to his publisher friend Suvorin, "in other words, publish an edition of my collected works. It would solve a number of my problems and it's what Tolstoy advises me to do." So Chekhov was aware that his work was of sufficient importance to merit the accolade that Russian culture reserves for its major literary figures: a multi-volume edition of complete collected writings. The 10-volume set brought out in Chekhov's lifetime by the German-Russian publisher Adolf Marx was, however, neither complete nor reliable.

As editors of subsequent Russian collections of Chekhov's writings came to recognize, a minimally representative edition should include not only his plays and stories but also his non-fictional prose, such as his fine letters, his two travel books (*Across Siberia* and *The Island of Sakhalin*) and a sampling of his drama criticism, of his articles on zoology and his journalism. Scholarly, annotated Russian editions print Chekhoviana that the general reader can do without, such as his two juvenile novels and his notebooks. Until recently, the most complete of these editions was the twenty-one volume one brought out between 1944 and 1951 by a special decree of the Soviet government.

It was marred by numerous censorship cuts and an ideologically slanted critical apparatus, faults that have been openly admitted in the Soviet press during the past decade. That edition is currently being replaced by the most ambitious compilation of Chekhov's writings ever attempted in his native country, a thirty-volume set that began to appear in 1974 and is to comprise eighteen volumes of prose and plays (sixteen have appeared so far) and twelve volumes of letters (eight already published). A team of Soviet scholars has supplied this edition with a historical and biographical commentary of astounding scope and thoroughness. The bowdlerizations, so numerous in the 1944-51 set, have been greatly reduced, and are now motivated more by prudery than by ideology.

In English-speaking countries, where Chekhov is currently perhaps the most popular playwright after Shakespeare, there has long been a need for an annotated edition of his plays and fiction such as one takes for granted with Elizabethan or Restoration English playwrights. Yet acting versions of his plays equipped with a knowledgeable commentary, like the ones of *The Seagull* by Jean-Claude van Itallie (1977) and by David French (1978), the latter intended specifically for Canadian audiences, are few.

The short stories, which are best understood if read in chronological sequence, are often published in English in erratic translations and with no regard to chronology. For example, indiscriminate mixing of mature stories with hastily written early sketches marred Constance Garnett's otherwise often admirable thirteen volumes, which first introduced Chekhov's short stories to the English-speaking world. *The Island of Sakhalin* appeared in 1968 in what may be the most inept translation of a major writer ever published.

Against this background, the nine-volume Oxford Chekhov, begun with the publication of its Volume III in 1964 and now completed with the appearance of Volume IV sixteen years later, is an important and most welcome step towards filling the gap. Volumes I to III, in their fetching red dust-jackets, offer all of Chekhov's works for the stage. The green-jacketed volumes IV to IX, contain all of Chekhov's stories and novellas written from 1888 (beginning with "The Steppe", but omitting the wonderful "Sleepy", published early that year) until his death. Each volume includes a preface, an introduction, textual variants, an account of each work's composition, notes and bibliography.

Compared to the twenty and thirty-volume collections available in Russian, this may seem scant: no letters, no travelogues, no essays. Most unfortunate of all, the volume of stories dating from before 1888, promised on the jackets of the early volumes of the series (it was initially planned as a ten-volume set), failed to materialize. Chekhov's vast output between 1880 and 1887 includes at least two dozen indispensable stories which are quintessentially Chekhovian. Omitting them from an edition which aims at completeness is a bit like beginning an edition of Shakespeare with *Romeo and Juliet* and leaving out *The Taming of the Shrew* and the Sonnets as immature. Nevertheless, a scholarly edition of Chekhov's plays and stories in reliable, if quirky, English translations, and in their proper chronological sequence, is a genuine achievement which should be welcomed by scholars, general readers, actors and producers. The criticism that follows is meant not in a spirit of denigration but rather of regret that the results are not as sympathetic to Chekhov or as helpful to his readers as they might have been.

Most modern multi-volume editions are prepared by teams of specialists. The Oxford Chekhov is a one-man project. Selection, translation, editing and annotation have all been done by Ronald Hingley, whose involvement with Chekhov goes back to 1950, when he published *Chekhov: A Biographical and Critical Study*. Reissued in 1965, it remains the best Chekhov biography available in English, far superior to such later competitors as the biographies by David Magarshack (which suffers from an uncritical reliance on the spurious memoirs of Lydia Avilova) or Ernest J. Simmons. Within its solid biographical framework, Hingley's book offers discerning, often subtle critical readings of Chekhov's work and sensible discussions of the myths and misconceptions which have surrounded the reception of Chekhov in the West.

The author of the introductions and annotations to the Oxford Chekhov seems a different person, someone who finds Chekhov uncongenial and puzzling. In place of the perceptive insights of the earlier biography, the new Hingley offers long discussions of the possible geographical locations of various Chekhovian characters, of the foods they eat and of their rank in the Russian society of the time, which Hingley visualizes in terms of an army. The commentary divides Chekhov's characters into those he is said to have approved of and those he didn't (Hingley calls Dr Astrov in *Uncle Vanya* "enigmatic" because he can't decide whether Chekhov approved of him or not). Numerous characters are branded "villains"—Hingley thinks that Chekhov was particularly good at creating villains. But to describe the flighty, self-deluded Olga in "The Grasshopper" or the vaguely unappealing Dr Neshchapov in "Home" as villains is to understand very little about Chekhov's method of characterization. Again, Dr Ragin in "Ward Number Six" is seen by Hingley as Tolstoyan because he refused to resist the evil around him. What a misunderstanding of everything Tolstoy stood for! He passionately urged people to resist evil; non-violent resistance is not the same thing as non-resistance.

This is not to suggest that all the prefatory material in all nine volumes is poor. The introduction to Volume VII gives the reader a modicum of social background to the stories contained there. Volume IX supplies information about the biographical circumstances in which its stories were written. Volume III, which contains Chekhov's mature plays, has a fine introductory essay, though Hingley gets into a muddle in his discussion of the vexing problem of why Chekhov called *The Seagull* and *The Cherry Orchard* comedies by including *Three Sisters*, which Chekhov never termed a comedy (Stanislavsky, whose memory deceived him, did) and even *Uncle Vanya*, which no one ever thought of as one. Much of the time, however, the introductions and prefaces are taken up with unhelpful geographical disquisitions, repeated outlines of the translation method and polemics against critics who found fault with the earlier volumes of the Oxford Chekhov. Hingley seems to grow palpably more irritated and bored with the entire project.

Irritation, noticeable in the earlier volumes of the Oxford Chekhov, was spelled out en toutes lettres in Hingley's *A New Life of Anton Chekhov* (1976), ostensibly an updated version of his 1950 biography, but actually a wrestling match between the sympathetic Chekhovian of 1950 and the frequently anti-Chekhovian commentator of the Oxford Chekhov. In the final chapter of *A New Life of Anton Chekhov* Hingley admitted that he went out of his way "to seek evidence of inconsiderate, shabby, inconsistent or downright shameful behaviour" on Chekhov's part. The same determination not to let Chekhov get away with anything is discernible in Hingley's approach to the plays and the stories in the Oxford Chekhov. Where in his 1950 book he expressed a slight preference for the stories he now considers them to be "by far the more significant" and agrees with Chekhov's younger contemporary Ivan Bunin that his plays are "far from his best work". (Bunin thought *Three Sisters* and *The Cherry Orchard* artistic failures.)

Turning to Hingley's comments on the stories, however, we find that some of the most perfectly realized ones do not measure up to his standards, either. "A Dreary Story" is "all harangue". The ending of "The Duel" is "second-rate" and "an embarrassment to the translator" (it is hard to imagine how anyone could have misread the mournful, muffled finale of "The Duel" as an "optimistic affirmative" one and therefore "irritating" and "full of bathos"). "The Bishop," one of Chekhov's supreme masterpieces, with its taut structure and its clear, precise prose rhythms betrays, to Hingley's mind, "a certain weariness" and "some slackness in the verbal texture".

The question poses itself: what sort of translation could be produced by a man with such an attitude to Chekhov? Well, it is not the version he might have produced had he liked and respected Chekhov more than he does, but neither is it as bad as it might be. His mistranslations are few and unimportant. By and large, Hingley understands perfectly what Chekhov has to say and renders it ably and resourcefully. When he is willing to translate the text faithfully and leave well enough alone, Hingley can produce versions of Chekhov that are models.

Such is the case with his "Gusev" and "The Darling", though the latter is flawed by the change of the title to "Angel", which does away with the amused condescension with which Chekhov regarded the heroine of that story and replaces it with an admiration he never intended. Unhappily, however, Hingley rarely leaves well alone. His policy on translation, restated in several of the volumes of the Oxford Chekhov, boils down to his desire "to give Chekhov the kind of language which he himself might have used, had he chanced to be writing in English", a proposition to which no reasonable person could object. In practice, however, his way of supplying Chekhov with an English voice involves drastic reshaping of his texts which sometimes amount to rewriting. To no discernible purpose he breaks down Chekhov's long periods and paragraphs into groups of short ones, or, conversely, joins sequences of brief sentences into one long one. Lines of dialogue are eliminated at will.

Here is a passage from "A Woman's Kingdom", literally translated: "This conversation excited Anna. She ate nothing, she only drank a glass of wine. 'Will you please, finally, let me say something', she spoke." And here is Hingley: "His talk unnerved Anne. She ate nothing, drank only one glass of wine, and told him that he must for goodness' sake let her speak." Or, another example, a description of a park, from "The Black Monk": "There always reigned here a mood that suggested sitting down and composing a ballad." This is amplified to "The atmosphere was always positively elegiac." The overall effect of Hingley's changes is like hearing a Mozart serenade, originally scored for a string orchestra and two horns, played by a wind ensemble. All the notes are there, but what is the point of such re-orchestration?

Russian literary style admits the repetition of words and sentences with far greater frequency than does English. Hingley rightly accuses Constance Garnett of mechanically reproducing this peculiarity in her translations. But Hingley's own rigidly enforced rule of never allowing Chekhov to repeat anything can result in awkwardness. When a character says "Oh, my God!" he has to say "Ye Gods!" if this exclamation is repeated a line or two later. The Russian word *maslo*, for example, means either oil or butter, depending on its modifying adjective. A servant in "The Duel", sent for salad oil, says he is going to fetch the butter—a non-sequitur which arises from Hingley's automatic refusal to translate *maslo* twice with the same word.

This avoidance of repetition has been particularly damaging in the instances where repeated words or phrases serve as leitmotifs. In "Rothschild's Fiddle", the word *ubytok*, "financial loss", is reiterated as the protagonist slowly realizes that his loss was not money, but his failure to achieve a meaningful life. Translating the hypnotically repeated *ubytok* and its plural, *ubytki*, by a variety of expressions, such as "waste of money" and "more losses", Hingley sabotages the structure and dilutes the meaning of the story. The same thing happens with the exclamation "To escape!" in "The Duel", which loses its function as a leitmotif by being varied in English every time it occurs. Fortunately, the analogous leitmotif in *Three Sisters*, "To Moscow!", has been left intact.

A feature that may cost the Oxford Chekhov many readers outside Britain is Hingley's determination to impose typically English speech mannerisms on Chekhov's Russian characters. Whenever Chekhov mentions an elderly man or an elderly woman, this is changed to "old boy" or "old girl". Mrs Merchutkina, in the farce *The Anniversary*, has for some reason been turned into a London cockney. Semiliterate and peasant characters speak a dialect which an earlier reviewer, Stuart Hood, has identified as "a kind of demotic southern English". Would a cultivated Englishwoman who dabbled in the arts and hobnobbed with celebrities really have bidden farewell to the fashionable painter with whom she was having an affair by saying "You're a good chap, Ryabovsky

Tales from Chekhov

They are in a hotel in a foreign country
where the morals are different. It is their
first time away from home, and it is not
going well. He, as a leading industrialist,
has implosion on his mind: the destruction
of their vacuum by the external pressures
of this place—the laughter and fertility,
arrogant machismo, spicy cooking. He hopes
his British restraint will see him through . . .
But there are internal forces to contend with
as well. Their marriage has crept safely past
its "accursed seventh year"—without children.
—Husband and wife fall back on each other.
He obscurely feels and resents foreign blood
in her; it allows her to feel at home here,
in this ruined, pregnant city—and keeps her
from understanding him. He becomes cynical.
Other women he sees begin to look attractive . . .
But he gets nowhere. Meanwhile, she discovers
the extinct possibilities that every woman has
in her past—and mournfully explores them.

Their respective tourism exhausts them both.
He helps her downstairs with his knuckle cocked
against the small of her back like a trigger.
It is a last, sarcastic form of etiquette,
—Ironic kidnapper with nonchalant victim,
they go down to the bar together . . .

Michael Hofmann

old sport"? This is what Hingley makes Chekhov's Olga in "The Grasshopper" say. To my American ear it evokes Colonel Blimp rather than the unconventional bohemian the story describes.

The same desire to make Chekhov more accessible by anglicizing him has led to frequent replacement of Russian proper names with English ones. There live in this strange Russia people named Jake, and Mike the pigman (and Dimitri the swineherd), and even Ginger and Fred. Such names as Anna, Maria and Elena, which one wouldn't expect to cause difficulty to speakers of English, are systematically changed to Anne, Mary and Helen.

But the names that are really difficult to pronounce for people who know no Russian are left intact. Should not Hingley have changed the name of the little boy Yegorushka, who is the protagonist of "The Steppe", to George, Nadezhda in "The Duel" to Hope, and Dunyasha in *The Cherry Orchard* to Dixie, perhaps, since the name is an affectionate diminutive of Eudoxia? Does this sort of thing, carried out partially and inconsistently, help anyone to get a better grasp of Chekhov?

In an effort to improve on the work of Constance Garnett and his other predecessors, Hingley has replaced several titles that have long been accepted in English with new ones of his own devising. Some of these changes are successful. "A Nervous Breakdown" is an improvement on "An Attack of Nerves", just as "A Marriageable Girl" is a better contextual rendering of "Nevesta" than the earlier English versions of this title, "The Bride" or "The Betrothed".

Other changes of title though, are less good. "Anna Round the Neck", for example, is a title Chekhov wanted to be misleading, as confusing in the original as it is in English. Replacing it with "The Order of St Anne" gives away the surprise that what is referred to is the medal and not the young wife Anna. The title *A Tragedian in Spite of Himself* was meant to evoke Molière's *Le Médecin malgré lui* and other similarly named seventeenth and eighteenth-century plays. Changing it to *A Tragic Role* obliterates the reference Chekhov intended. "A Man in the Case", the literal equivalent of "Chelovek v futlyare", is open to misunderstanding, since it does not tell the reader that the case in question is the kind used to carry a violin or a pair of binoculars. But since the story's conformist hero is compared by the author to a hermit crab, recent English translators have satisfactorily rendered the title as "The Man in a Shell". Hingley makes it "A Hard Case", an opaque pun that throws away Chekhov's title and does not fit anything in the story.

The most damaging change is perpetrated on the great story usually known as either "The Grasshopper" or "La Cigale". The Russian title is an epithet that now exists in the language only as the first word of Ivan Krylov's adaptation of La Fontaine's fable "La Cigale et la Fourmi", which everyone in Russia knows by heart. In the English version of this fable, "The Grasshopper and the Ant", the two insects have no gender, while in French they are both female. But in Russian, Krylov replaced La Fontaine's cicada with a dragonfly, which is of feminine gender, whereas the ant is masculine. The fable thus became a confrontation between an irresponsible female and a sedate, provident male. There is an obvious parallel here with the situation of the story's protagonists, a parallel which Chekhov's unique and striking title forcefully established in the minds of his Russian readers. Hingley is aware of the connection of the title with Krylov's fable, but apparently not of the fable's sexual symbolism or its relevance to the story's plot (he doesn't seem to have read any of the versions, because he thinks that Krylov's dragonfly is the equivalent of La Fontaine's *fourmi*). So he chose to call the story "The Butterfly"—a title no doubt psychologically superior, entomologically equally defensible. What would one think of a translator of James Joyce's *Ulysses* who missed the novel's Homeric underpinnings and thought it more appropriate to call the novel *Hamlet*?

[illegible] the informative [illegible] Donna Orwin in the [illegible] Canadian translation [illegible] by David French [illegible] copious notes to [illegible] version of the same [illegible] notes seem unhelp[illegible] fascina[illegible]

tion with geography leads him to gloss every town and village mentioned in the text and to give its distance from some other town. When a character mentions Balzac and his novel *Le Père Goriot*, there is a note stating that *Le Père Goriot* is indeed a novel by Balzac. In volume after volume we are told that Tolstoy and Dostoevsky were novelists and are supplied with their dates. Identification of quoted material, all-important in Chekhov, is by contrast handled haphazardly. Readers are repeatedly told that characters in Chekhov's plays cite lines from Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin* and Lermontov's *The Demon*, when they are in fact humming arias from operas by Tchaikovsky and Anton Rubinstein based on these works. When Dr Dorn in *The Seagull* sings something about talking flowers, Hingley doesn't state (as Donna Orwin and Paul Schmidt did) that this is Siebel's aria "Faites-lui mes aveux" from Gounod's *Faust*, information indispensable to the actor playing the part. (Ideally, of course, an academic edition of Chekhov should supply the words and the music to the numerous popular songs and operatic arias quoted in the plays.)

The three university students on a tour of Moscow brothels in "A Nervous Breakdown" repeatedly burst into a plaintive song that begins "Against my will to these sad shores". Hingley correctly identifies this as the Prince's aria from an opera by Dargomyzhsky, based on a dramatic poem by Pushkin. Hingley calls both the opera and the poem *The Mermaid*. But Pushkin and Dargomyzhsky depicted a *rusalka*, the aquatic Giselle of Russian folk legend, a peasant maiden seduced, abandoned and driven to a watery death by the prince she loved. The aria of the penitent prince which the students sing again and again is meant to reflect the situation of the seduced and abandoned women who have now become prostitutes in the brothels the young men visit.

Another reference central to a work's meaning, but missed by Hingley occurs in the play *The Swan Song* (*Calchas*). Hingley tells us that the play's hero, an old provincial actor, has just played Calchas in Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*. This possibility would never have occurred to Chekhov's contemporaries (and where, least of all in a small provincial theatre in Russia, *was* this play ever performed in the nineteenth century?). The Calchas in question is of course the buffo in Offenbach's operetta *La Belle Hélène*, enormously popular at the time and frequently mentioned in Chekhov's letters and stories. Hingley misses the whole point of the play's subtitle—the pitiful situation of the actor who once used to shine in productions of Shakespeare and Pushkin, but is reduced in his old age to clowning in frivolous operettas.

I have dwelt on the shortcomings of the Oxford Chekhov in such detail because they are important and ought to be known. But if the commentary and annotations are a let-down, the edition still constitutes an undeniable contribution to the greater availability and understanding of Chekhov in English, for which we should all be grateful to the Oxford University Press. Hingley's efforts to pummel Chekhov's prose and dialogue into some alien shape are often defeated by Chekhov's miraculous ability (not shared by all Russian writers) to resist mishandling by translators. There are many passages in both the stories and the plays which are beautifully and faithfully rendered and in them one sees the hand of the Ronald Hingley who wrote that excellent 1950 biography.

In *The Ardis Anthology of Russian Futurism* (392pp. Ardis, 2901 Heatherway, Ann Arbor, Michigan. $22.50. 0 88233 469 7), the editors, Carl R. Proffer and Ellendea Proffer, have provided us with a series of critical essays on Futurism in the arts. Seminal works by leading writers of the movement (Mayakovsky, Khlebnikov, Burliuk, Guro, Pasternak, etc) are included, prefaced by the manifesto of December 12, 1912, "A Slap in the Face of Public Taste". Although *The Ardis Anthology of Russian Futurism* is mainly concerned with literature, it also contains original studies on Russian paintings during the Futurist and Constructivist period, reproductions of rare lithographs and gouaches by artists such as El Lissitzky and Rodchenko, and two photographs of L. Popova's set designs for Meyerhold's production of *The Magnanimous Cuckold* (1922).

Pontifical protests

By J. S. Conway

PIERRE BLET, ROBERT A. GRAHAM, ANGELO MARTINI, BURKHART SCHNEIDER (Editors):
Actes et Documents du Saint Siège relatifs à la seconde guerre mondiale
Tome X: Le Saint Siège et les victimes de la guerre, Janvier 1944-Juillet 1945.
685pp. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana. L. 22,000.

This penultimate volume drawn from the Vatican's archives for the period of the Second World War completes the record of the Holy See's activities on behalf of the war's victims. (Volume XI will cover the diplomatic exchanges for the same final period.) Despite the clear evidence that the tide of war had turned against the Axis, these final months saw an intensification of the persecutions, exterminations and other atrocities waged against the civilian populations of Europe, especially the Jews. The Vatican's efforts to obtain relief of these sufferings by representations to the respective warring governments continued to be made, despite the depressing record of failure in preceding years. Its resources were always too few, its motives were suspected, and its interventions were frequently ignored or turned aside.

Pope Pius XII was forced to recognize by 1944 that his hopes of influencing the German government were practically nil. The remonstrances addressed through the Papal Nuncio in Berlin met with continued refusal. More promising were the interventions made to the governments of Germany's lesser allies, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia. The Vatican was fortunate in having in these countries three energetic and capable representatives, whose dispatches and protests on behalf of its suffering victims, particularly the Jews, are here recorded in full. In Slovakia, the President, a Catholic priest, Josef Tiso, had already in 1942 responded to Vatican pressure by halting the deportation of Slovakia's Jews to Auschwitz and other extermination centres. By 1944, however, German pressure once again endangered the remaining Jews, and the Vatican was quickly alerted by its Apostolic Delegate, Burzio, to the likely consequences. In the summer of 1944, with a partisan uprising in eastern Slovakia, reprisals against the Jews began again. The Vatican immediately protested. Pope Pius even sent a personal letter condemning Monsignor Tiso's behaviour as being inconsistent with the Church's teachings, which produced a long reply in Latin, in which Tiso attempted to justify his policies.

Equally energetic were the protests addressed to the Hungarian government, which had been forced, after the German take-over in March, to allow the deportation of half of Hungarian Jewry to Auschwitz. At the end of June, Pius XII sent an open telegram to the Hungarian regent, Horthy, deploring such excesses, which, in part at least, led to the temporary cessation of those antisemitic measures. In October, however, with Horthy's virtual imprisonment, the overthrow of his government, and the approach of the Soviet Army, the Jewish position grew steadily worse. The Nuncio renewed his protests, sought to mobilize the Hungarian Catholics, and personally issued thousands of letters of protection to Jews, which afforded some relief.

In Romania, the Nuncio, Cassulo, also used his offices to warn the government against the Germans' intentions, and succeeded in saving a large number of the local Jews from extermination, though he was unable to prevent the deportation of those in North Transylvania under Hungarian control. Several convoys were allowed to escape to Turkey, where the Papal representative, later Pope John XXIII, showed himself vigorous in alleviating their plight.

Vatican diplomacy was also active in other areas. As the Allied forces fought their way up the Italian peninsula, the Holy See sent a series of requests to have the historic Italian cities, such as Ravenna, Florence, Verona, Venice and Milan, declared "open cities" or "hospital sanctuaries". Even though both the German and British military commanders were reluctant to allow any limitations on their freedom of action, the American government showed itself more favourable, and instructions were issued by General Eisenhower that wherever possible Italy's artistic and historic treasures should be spared. By contrast, the German brutality in shooting 300 hostages in the Roman catacombs in reprisal for an attack on German troops in Rome itself, could not be prevented. The Vatican efforts to alleviate the plight of Italian soldiers captured by the Germans after Mussolini's fall and transported to Germany or Poland, were equally meagre in results. And although frequently prompted by American organizations to seek relief for other Nazi victims, especially Jews, in Poland, Lithuania and France, the Vatican met with little or no success. By 1945, the Holy See was also receiving complaints about the behaviour of the Soviet troops, including a notable letter from the Archbishop of Cracow, who listed the anti-clerical activities of the victorious Russians. Nothing could be obtained through representations in Washington or London.

The British government's attitude to the Holy See was cool and reserved. It continued to regard the Vatican as too Italian in sympathy to deserve much consideration and refused to yield concessions on humanitarian grounds. By the end of the war, the Vatican's hope of acting as a neutral negotiator for a future peace settlement had proved illusory. Its pleas for the victims of the war through the established channels of its diplomatic representatives were at best responsible for some local if significant alleviations. Those who argue that a more active policy of protest might have achieved better results can see from these documents how implacable and frustrating were the policies of the warring governments to all arguments based either on the rights of the Church or on humanitarian and charitable grounds.

Uprooted radicals

By Julius Lewin

GIDEON SHIMONI:
Jews and Zionism: the South African Experience, 1910-1967
428pp. Oxford University Press. £12.
0 19 670179 8

The title of this book obscures its importance. It is in fact almost a history of the Jews in South Africa and as such a necessary and welcome corrective to the standard history by Saron and Hotz published in 1955. That volume was a worthy successor to Louis Herrman's pioneer history but it suffered from a serious deficiency. Depicting South Africa's Jews as entirely bourgeois, never radical, it barely mentioned the part they have played to this day in asserting liberal and socialist values in the hostile atmosphere of South African politics.

Gideon Shimoni's book now redresses the balance. Though his intention was to write the history of Zionism in South Africa, he could hardly handle this theme without showing how Jews had faced the dilemma of their strange situation in a land riddled with racial prejudice. When Jewish immigrants reached Cape Town in the late nineteenth century, they brought with them an eastern European heritage which was to have far-reaching effects not hitherto traced.

Three-quarters of them were *Litvaks* who came from Lithuania as it was widely defined before 1917. As such they (or their parents) had known the *Bund*. This was an association of Jewish workers active in Russia and Poland for twenty turbulent years from 1897. At that very time Herzl's dream of a Jewish state was beginning to rally Jews in Europe. The problem lay in this question: was it necessary or desirable for an ethnic group like the Jews to organize separately [illegible] affiliate to the larger radical party? The Bund came into conflict with Lenin himself who regarded ethnic organization as likely to require political federalism, which would impair the centralized party he was building up.

This problem was destined to haunt South African Jews. With beliefs derived from their European heritage, they had to keep a wary eye on the risks of being accused of dual loyalties. The rise of Zionism and the emergence of Israel sharpened their dilemma. It became acute when the Afrikaner Nationalists in the climate of the 1930s began to indulge in open antisemitism under the stimulus of the notorious Eric Louw and of Verwoerd.

The Nationalist Party actually excluded Jews from membership. Not that Jews sought to join it; but in time they did seek to appease the Afrikaners by keeping silent as Jews in the controversies about apartheid. Even rabbis were reluctant to make common cause with Christian clergy in protest against racism. As individuals, however, Jews played a prominent part in liberal and radical bodies, a part out of all proportion to their numbers.

Dr Shimoni has carefully sought the names of nearly all the leading Jews so involved. On this impressive list, the first and for long the foremost figure was Morris Alexander, the first liberal to sit in the Union Parliament, who deserves a better biographer than he has so far had. His was almost certainly the first voice to proclaim the demand for equal rights regardless of race, colour or creed. The source of his beliefs is worth noting. A poor boy, he won a scholarship to Cambridge in 1900. There he came under the influence of the famous theologian, Solomon Schechter, whose daughter he later married.

Schechter, born in Romania, and educated in Vienna and Berlin, was invited to England by Claude Montefiore, who recognized his extraordinary talents. After a spell in Cambridge, Schechter went to New York to head the Jewish Theological Seminary there. He anticipated that after her marriage to Alexander his daughter Ruth would meet Olive Schreiner in Cape Town; she did, and was very much influenced by her.

From the rich detail in this valuable book, one inference stands out as more significant than the persistent internal conflicts of South African Zionism. It is beyond doubt that radical thought was introduced into South Africa chiefly by Jewish immigrants.

The Jews have always been generous in supporting Israel with funds, for the transfer of which they have needed official approval; another reason for refraining from antagonizing the Government first elected to office in 1948, in the very month of Israel's birth.

By a supreme irony, outside Dr Shimoni's period, which regrettably ends in 1967, South Africa and Israel entered in 1976 into a pact of mutual cooperation. It was perhaps understandable, if not entirely wise, for the two most friendless countries in the world to do this. When the black majority at the United Nations reiterates its angry condemnation of this "unholy alliance", they fail to understand how it has come about that apartheid all through this century has been challenged not only in the comfortable halls of the United Nations but in the front lines of Cape Town and Johannesburg.

Having planted the seeds of much fruitful radicalism, Jews were not slow to recognize how intellectual freedom in South Africa was narrowing down from precedent to precedent. Since Sharpeville in 1960 and again after Soweto in 1976, there has been a steady emigration of talented Jews to Britain where scores occupy academic posts with distinction, some continuing their research on their abandoned country. In making conditions so difficult for "rootless aliens" who persist in expressing liberal ideals, the regime, which cannot distinguish a Marxist from a liberal, has deprived the country of many of its best brains.

Tractarians' treasures

By A. I. Doyle

M. B. PARKES (Compiler):
The Medieval Manuscripts of Keble College, Oxford: a Descriptive Catalogue with Summary Descriptions of the Greek and Oriental Manuscripts.
360pp. Scolar Press. £75.
0 85967 504 1

Until this admirable volume appeared Keble was the only Oxford college which had a substantial collection of western medieval manuscripts yet no published catalogue; although for all the Oxford college collections except Balliol (with a new one by Sir Roger Mynors in 1963) we still depend on the work of H. O. Coxe (1852) and G. W. Kitchin (Christ Church, 1867). These catalogues are respectable by the standards of their time but wanting in the detail and the indexing which we have come to expect in this century, which were provided for most of the Cambridge colleges by M. R. James between 1895 and 1925, and for the Royal manuscripts by Warner and Gilson in 1921, or for the Lyell manuscripts by A. C. de la Mare in 1971. Keble was founded in 1870 and the collection here catalogued (which excludes modern manuscripts such as those relating to John Keble himself, the writings of William Bright and H. P. Liddon, and connected correspondence) was built up from 1881 by a series of gifts and bequests.

The medieval manuscripts were scarcely known to the scholarly world before Mr Parkes (lecturer in Palaeography at Oxford and for a number of years College Librarian) devoted some of his labours to them and, besides enlisting collaborators for the Greek and Oriental manuscripts (N. G. Wilson, A. D. Crown, R. A. May and C. Wakefield), invoked a wealth of expert advice on the various contents and styles that are represented. In the introduction to *The Medieval Manuscripts of Keble College, Oxford*, he shows how the careers and writings of the donors reflected the Tractarian and specifically ritualist sympathies of the college founders, although he is uncertain how far this was the case with Sir Thomas Brooke, from whose important connoisseur collection the largest number and most of the finest manuscripts came, via his brother.

There are seventy-one western, five Greek and thirteen Oriental manuscripts, in addition to fragments. The majority are liturgical or quasi-liturgical books with illustrations and decoration from diverse regions and schools, some of high quality and historical significance for date or place. In these respects they constitute a coherent group to which there is nothing closely comparable in Oxford, outside the much more comprehensive collections of the Bodleian. The most similar, though more extensive, collections are those of the Fitzwilliam Museum at Cambridge and the John Rylands Library at Manchester, both catalogued by M. R. James; and on a smaller scale with a more restricted range that at Waddesdon Manor recently catalogued by the late L. M. J. Delaissé, James Marrow and John de Witt (1977). In contrast with the Waddesdon Manor catalogue, which is extremely (and instructively) discursive in its application of Delaissé's methods, Mr Parkes's description of each book is very compact, especially the descriptions of illustration, decoration and other codicological details, which result from equally analytic examination of the same sorts of evidence.

But by no means all the Keble manuscripts are liturgical in content, and the variety as well as quality of the collection is considerable. Only a minority is of English origin, but they are all of more than average interest: for instance, a glossed copy of the Pauline epistles written at Salisbury in the late eleventh century, a late fourteenth-century book of hours illustrated by more than one artist (one of whom we know from the Carmelite Missal) showing patrons who may have been members of the Bohun family; a fifteenth-century breviary which belonged to Wolsingham priory and apparently of the appropriate Augustinian use. There is only one brief text in Middle English, but there are longer ones in Dutch, French, German and Italian. The most impressive illustration and decoration is to be found in books of foreign origin, such as a lectionary for the Dominican nuns of Regensburg c. 1270 with named marginal pictures of a number of them and the presumed patrons, a breviary produced in Naples in 1404 for the abbot of Monte Cassino, fifteenth-century *horae* by the Bedford and Arcimboldo Masters, a missal in French by the Fastolf Master, and devotions in German with full-page Renaissance miniatures of the life of Christ.

The scope and shape of the descriptions, as of the indexes (by Mr A. J. Piper), have been most carefully thought out for clarity and usefulness. A conspicuously successful innovation is the mode of foliating, by asterisks and the order of contents-lists, later additions to the original elements of a manuscript. Another personal advance in a previously neglected aspect is the record of punctuation, one of the advantages of which, as Mr Parkes points out, is the help it can afford in distinguishing changes of scribe (as well as revisers) in the very conventional *textura* (*littera textualis*) of liturgical manuscripts. A questionable practice is that of specifying only the opening page-reference for each item in a manuscript, which will be a nuisance should one want photocopies of the whole text, and may leave in doubt the presence of blanks which can be important in interpreting the make-up of a volume. "Magenta" is anachronistic for medieval pigments, and "baguette" foreign to most English border decoration, for which there is native contemporary nomenclature. MS 32 is said to be written in *fere-textura* but pl 51 shows an ordinary *textura*. The vinet of MS 58 is stylistically s xv in rather than xiv/xv, and MS 69 can be dated by script and illumination in the first half rather than broadly in the fourteenth century. MS 80 is said to have been probably in corporate ownership, yet the *dicta probatoria* (secundo folio), supposed to be quoted in such cases, are omitted.

These are minor cavils. This catalogue and its indexes are not merely a means of access to the particular collection but also provide models of treatment and sources of information for similar manuscripts under study elsewhere. All good catalogues serve that extra function to a great extent, but Mr Parkes's makes such distinct advances on its predecessors that it is more than a simple addition to the tools of the trade. One such bonus is a table which displays the comparative order and occurrence of the different items in all the books of hours.

The physical design of the volume has obviously gone hand-in-hand with the intellectual. The entries and the indexes are in two columns with generous margins utilized for shoulder notes and plate references; the use of roman, bold and italic typeface is clear and restful; the abundant monochrome illustrations are ingeniously incorporated in the text, and the colour plates (grouped in one gathering, apart from the frontispiece) are of exceptional fidelity, with scales of reproduction recorded in both categories when not (as mostly) original size. Besides Scolar Press and Keble College, the British Academy, the British Library and the Marc Fitch Fund deserve applause for their support of this worthy presentation, as does the Adeby Trust in the preparation of the catalogue.

The written versions

By Margaret Crum

PETER BEAL (Compiler):
Index of Literary Manuscripts
Volume I, 1450-1625
636pp. London: Mansell/New York: R. R. Bowker £130.

The appearance of the first volume of this work raises tremendous expectations. With the present possibilities of storing, retrieving and presenting information in mind, a hope may arise that this book, designed to take us down to the year 1900 when its five volumes are complete, may provide scholars with some of the confidence of an earlier time, when personal acquaintance among literati, and a shared knowledge of existing collections, were taken for granted. In the last hundred years, scholarly editions, bibliographies, . . . catalogues . . . and articles have multiplied until the field seemed infinite. Now, perhaps, vast as it is, we may find that it has been mapped. Perhaps, too, in the course of exploration there will have been discoveries? Another Strode or Traherne? And we may hope that now error, including deliberate forgery, will be more easily recognized.

The reality is, of course, in some respects otherwise. In the General Introduction John Horden, the senior editor, describes how the scope had ("for the present") to be limited. The choice for this first volume, 1450-1625, was restricted to manuscripts of seventy-two writers, selected with the help of the *Concise Bibliography of English Literature* (A seventy-third is Sir Thomas Elyot, whose letters, etc, are noted, though no literary manuscripts survive to be indexed). If the papers of some obscure or unknown poet had been preserved till now in a descendant's household, or in a library or record office, no place could be found for a mention here, whatever the interest, unless the writer had chanced to keep also the work of some more famous contemporary. In that case (and it does great credit to the Historical Manuscripts Commissioners' indexers, to archivists and to librarians, and most of all to Peter Beal's thoroughness, that this is so) an entry would almost certainly be found. When the final index volume appears it will always be worth trying for a lead on any writer of the period, but the limits of the work will have to be remembered. What we have is an index of the manuscripts of most of the significant writers, and not a catalogue or census. This work is only incidentally a general guide to the manuscripts of the period, but it will always be a valuable quarry.

The index entries for each of the seventy-two writers are preceded by introductions varying in length, from a brief and almost entirely negative sentence on Deloney (perhaps Queen Elizabeth, or James VI and I, or Thomas Watson or Sir Edward Dyer or someone, should have had his place?) to thirty-seven full columns on Donne. Usually a closely packed account is given of existing or recorded manuscripts and of the work that has been, or is in process of being, done on them. Peter Beal proceeds from autograph manuscripts (in some cases pointing out erroneous ascriptions) and including letters, working notes or marks of ownership in books, and signatures on official documents) to material of biographical interest, including wills, and letters to the writer concerned, all with reference to where they may be found in print. There is a list of published facsimiles. Attention is directed towards authorized copies, and to other index entries of special significance. There is a list of manuscripts which have not been given entries because of their late date or (in some cases) their known derivation from printed sources. In the course of this account there is full reference to published work by other scholars, going back as far as Hearne and William Oldys, to work in progress (with which Peter Beal seems well in touch) and to a few unpublished theses. The task of locating and sifting this mass of material was formidable and its completion is a fine achievement.

It is in the introductory sections that room was found to develop certain discoveries of vital interest that emerged during research. For example: the story of the Burley MS, thought in 1912 to have been burnt with its owner's house, found, lost, and found again (Wotton); from the Shakespeare Introduction, Humphrey Moseley's intention to print the commonplace book entitled *Hesperides*, and Mary Hobb's discovery (now published) of a probably authentic variant of one of the sonnets in a miscellany of songs copied ten or twenty years after the date of publication; and (from a lengthy but compelling description) the history of the Conway papers in connection with Donne and some of his literary friends. Such discoveries are in some measure a justification for the book.

Index entries are lettered and numbered, and the use of combinations of letters and of decimal points will give infinite flexibility. The entries are divided into categories, signposted as "Arrangement", at the end of the Introduction: verse, prose, marginalia, or whatever. Within each category the sequence is alphabetical. Each entry is in four segments: the first identifies the work; the second gives the nature of the manuscript; the third indicates what scholarly use has been made *of the text*; and the fourth is the shelf-mark, with folio references. The initial entry for each work refers in the third segment to original publication and to later authoritative editions. It would have been clearer if this information had followed the title of the work, to which the eye must return from subsequent entries, instead of being merged with the account of the use by scholars of whichever manuscript happens to stand first. In the context of this book, "manuscript" means copy (autograph or scribal) of any separable work, so that a volume of poems may contain two hundred or more such "manuscripts". This is a point to which I shall return.

There are thirty-four facsimiles, for the most part chosen because the hands, or the particular document, have not been represented in easily available published collections; or, often, because its content, or its history, is of peculiar interest. The quality does vary, more for lack of contrast or clarity in the original than from any fault in reproduction. For the sake of economy, facsimiles and text are printed on the same kind of paper, with a resulting rather dreary grey look. In some cases there has also been reduction—5 per cent, 10 per cent, even 15 per cent—in size; it would have been preferable to reproduce a smaller area, in the original size. Hooker's hand suffers most, and even though the reduction is slight, the effect is unnecessarily forbidding; Jonson's (diminished by 15 per cent) seems somehow deprived of grace. By contrast, other plates are good enough for the medium not to be intrusive: for example, the very characteristic pages of Bale and Gavin Douglas, Camden's Society of Antiquaries paper, newly discovered; or Tyndale's grievous letter to his prison governor. The limits of the frames have not always been placed with proper care. Leland's is so carelessly cut that part of a hasty note made on the negative in the Bodleian photographic department is, deplorably, preserved.

The physical size of the volume could have been reduced without loss. From the first, the impression is given that saving space was no part of the scheme, and the appearance is the better for the generous use of paper. Something might have been achieved by economy of words, both in general plan and in the details of expression. Of the plan, John Horden writes: "the decision to give each manuscript text an individual serial number was not taken lightly", and his account of the dilemma commands respect. But the choice means (to take an extreme example) that Donne's poems alone occupy nearly four thousand entries, almost a quarter of this heavy and expensive volume. I find it very hard to conceive of a user for whom this bulk will seem to be justified by the information gained—exact page references and an account of the use by former scholars of each text in each book of verse. This disproportion will be repeated in the next volume.

Peter Beal believes that the value of poetical miscellanies has been underrated and that much work remains to be done, and no doubt he is right. But anybody working on manuscript poetry must recognize that each collection has to be known and assessed, and that this can be done only by a scrutiny of which the first and easiest part will probably be the noting of kind and order of contents. Texts cannot be studied in isolation and short cuts are impossible. It would be a dismal prospect if researchers were to rely on photocopy (easily ordered with the help of this index) of individual pieces. But descriptions can be useful.

The descriptive part of the index entry here is restricted to little more than a note of the name of the copyist or collector, or his habitation, and an approximate date. The promised index will (with much labour by the user) give a fuller view of the manuscripts. (It will also help us to incorporate any corrections concerning whole manuscripts which may come to light.) There is here a "chicken and egg" problem, and the editors must have considered using the facilities the other way round—that is, referring from first lines to descriptions of manuscripts. I regret that a way was not found to reconcile some such plan with the need for "the simplest and least ambiguous formula".

In some cases we are better provided for, in the matter of description. It was found necessary to include in the introductions to some poets—to Herbert, Donne, Browne and Davies, for example—a catalogue of certain important manuscripts, those occupied entirely or for the most part by the work of the writer under consideration, and to refer to the description from the entry. Repetition has been reduced, though not avoided, in these entries.

Due to the size and cost of the Index, it will not often be found outside libraries, so that it will probably always be used in conjunction with the works it refers to. This should affect the compilers' view of what is needed from them. They are relieved of the obligation to do much more than refer to the work of others, and the difficult and rather dangerous practice of summary will be unnecessary beyond transmission of factual outlines. But the compilers' own discussions of relevant questions will legitimately find place in the introductions, once they have been brought to a state of crystallization that can stand beside the brevity and clarity of the surrounding material. Interest in manuscripts and their whereabouts is properly inseparable from the need to work on them.

The historian's tools

By Geoffrey Naylor

GEOFFREY KEYNES:
The Library of Edward Gibbon
Second edition
293pp. St Paul's Bibliographies. £12.
0 906795 02 8

The first edition of Sir Geoffrey Keynes's *Gibbon's Library* was published in 1940, and most of the stock was lost in an air raid soon afterwards. This valuable listing of the recorded contents of Gibbon's library at various times in his life has now been cleanly reprinted from Sir Geoffrey's own working copy, which contains his handwritten notes recording some changes in locations (although it has proved impracticable to alter them all). The most important addition is the new Appendix giving over sixty titles from a previously unedited catalogue in the Pierpont Morgan Library. These addenda include Payne Knight's *Remains of the Worship of Priapus* (1786) presented to Gibbon by the Society of Dilettanti, as well as many other classical and general titles which fill out our knowledge of these "tools of my historical manufacture", as Gibbon referred to his working library.

No room has been found for a reference to the bibliographical indications provided in Miss Patricia Craddock's edition of the *English Essays*, and Sir Geoffrey's unaltered introduction necessarily cites editions of Gibbon's autobiography and letters that are no longer standard. Nevertheless, it remains authoritative as an elegant introduction to the composition, and to the regrettably piecemeal dispersal, of a famous collection that provided many of the sources for the great work.